

Aluse Enterprises

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TOWARD A CIVIL SOCIETY: ANGER MANAGEMENT USING GS AND THE TECHNIQUES OF THE PROFESSIONAL ACTOR

Katherine Liepe-Levinson

How do actors learn to manage and control their emotions on stage at a drop of the hat? This workshop employs general semantics formulations and the traditional rational-emotive behavior modification techniques first set forth by Dr. Albert Ellis (and later espoused by health gurus such as Andrew Weil, Tony Robbins, and Depak Chopra). The workshop demonstrates the ways professional actors actually use the same basic techniques and formulations to control their emotions on stage. Through a series of group activities, individual exercises, and role-plays, this workshop offers participants concrete methods to use to more effectively and constructively manage and control their anger in “real life.” If we are to manage the conflicts of nations, first we must be able to better manage how we act in the world as individuals.

Rationale: Dr. Jerry Wilde emphatically states in his book *Anger Management in Schools: Alternatives of Student Violence*, that it is very difficult, if not impossible for Children or Adults to focus or learn at all without first having a sense of both physical and emotional safety or security. To support his claims, Dr. Wilde turns to psychologist Abraham Maslow, founder of humanistic psychology. Maslow first became known through his description of “the hierarchy of basic needs,” which drives all human motivation. At the bottom rung of Maslow’s hierarchy of basic needs are the “survival needs”—the physiological needs for air, water, and food. Second on Maslow’s hierarchy is the need safety and security. Similar to Korzybski’s structural differential and the scientific method of reasoning or abstracting, the lower level needs and specifics on Maslow’s hierarchy must be addressed first before one can move on to the higher order concerns or the needs of love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Therefore, Wilde suggests that we need to address the lower order need for anger management--not simply for our physical safety and welfare, but for our very growth and development as human beings.

One of the challenges in both teaching and attempting to practice anger management is the fear that if we work to manage our anger--we risk being taken advantage of by others--we risk becoming some else’s “door mat.” But often in our attempt to “stand up for ourselves,” some of our knee jerk or “signal responses” to stressful, frustrating, disappointing, or unfair situations may ultimately harm us even more without changing or defusing the situation. From Shakespeare’s play *Romeo and Juliet*, to the films, *The War of the Roses* (with Kathleen Turner, Michael Douglas, and Danny Devito) and *Changing Lanes* (with Ben Affleck and Samuel L. Jackson), the “one wrong turn deserves another” mentality fails to deliver a constructive or lasting solution to our various woes.

The goal of this anger management workshop is to offer techniques using general semantics formulations, traditional rational-emotive behavior modification methods, and techniques actors use to manage their emotions on the stage to enhance one’s communication skills and toleration of life’s frustrations and disappointments. These life skills will help us to make the most rational

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choices and decisions for ourselves while still respecting the rights of others—and therefore to successfully move up Maslow’s hierarchy of basic human needs to the higher order concerns.

This workshop in Anger Management Training:

Reviews several of the most established theories and therapeutic formulations used to manage anger including the limbic brain approach (punish and reward, anger release/primal scream), traditional behavior modification (counting to ten, etc.), and the “family myths” and formal psychoanalysis methods.

Demonstrates the benefits of a general semantics/rational-emotive behavioral approach to anger management.

Teaches participants specific techniques to help them view and respond constructively to difficult or even unfair situations.

Offers specific methods to improve one’s overall communication skills to help participants experience a greater sense of personal and social control which relieves both stress and anger.

Demonstrates how to use the material as turnkey training for colleagues, parents, educators, and children.

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Overview of the Workshop:

- I. Introduction
 - A. Importance of Anger Management for Adults and Children Alike
 - B. GS and Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Needs—the Need for both Physical and Emotional Safety and Security
 - C. Anger Management through GS as a Way to Pursue the “Higher Needs” of “Self-Esteem” and “Self-Actualization”
 - D. How Actors Reproduce and Manage their Emotions on Stage
- II. Causes of Anger
- III. How Anger Affects the Body
 - A. Examining Our Individual “Fury Poses”
- IV. Review of Established Theories and Therapeutic Models to Manage Anger
 - A. Practical Behavior Modification Approach
 - B. Limbic Brain Approach
 1. Punish and Reward
 2. Anger Release/Primal Scream
 - C. “Family Myths” and Psychoanalysis
- V. How Anger Operates in term's of One's Own Thinking and Levels of Abstracting
 - A. Scripting One's Own Anger Fairytale
- VI. GS, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), and the Work of the Actor to Manage Anger
 1. The Demand/Should Conflict Scene
 2. Owning One's Behavior Scene
 3. Anger Talk Down Technique and the Actor's Use of Emotional Recall
 4. Low-Frustration-Tolerance: Constructively Tolerating and Addressing the Frustrations and Disappointments of Life

Again, if we are to manage the conflicts of nations, I believe that first we must be able to better manage how we act in the world as individuals.

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Bibliography: An Actor Prepares by Constantine Stanislavski; *Drive Yourself Sane: Using the Uncommon Sense of General Semantics* by Susan Presby Kodish and Bruce Kodish; *Anger Management in Schools: Alternatives to Student Violence* by Jerry Wilde; *A New Guide to Rational Living* by Albert Ellis; *Nasty People: How to Stop Being Hurt by Them Without Becoming One of Them* by Jay Carter; *Anger and How to Handle It* published by Channing L. Bete Co.

Dr. Katherine Liepe-Levinson, founder of Muse Enterprises and the educational curriculum “Theater Dynamics for Critical Thinking,” has worked in the fields of drug prevention, education, and staff development for more than two decades in urban and rural settings. Her background in education and prevention, and twenty-five years in the performing arts, has produced a series of workshops (including Stress Management, Cultural Diversity Training, Anger Management, and Motivating Students) that explore important topical issues through traditional, science-based, therapeutic models and the techniques of the professional actor. Her career in education includes the New York City Department of Education Arts-in-Counseling Team (SPARK); Hunter College, Empire State College, City College; the National Conservatory of Shakespeare; guest faculty for High School of Performing Arts; director of the Colgate University Children's Theatre and Outreach Program; and consultant for The Learning Project, the New York City Department of Education, Educational Research, Inc., and The Bureau For At-Risk Youth. During the 2001-2003 school years, she worked under a grant from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) and NYS OASAS (New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services) to help at-risk elementary, middle school, and high school students in eighteen school districts and fifteen different prevention programs throughout New York City.

Dr. Liepe-Levinson has given workshops and classes for educational conferences and programs throughout the United States. Several of her courses and workshops have been written up in national journals and magazines. She is also a published author who writes on education, prevention, popular culture, and the arts. Her work as an artist includes Broadway, off-Broadway, dramatic stock, television, film, and commercials.

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