

The Gateway Project
“A Path to Nonviolence.”

Anger Management vs. Abuser Intervention Programs

Intimate partner violence is based on one person’s unrealistic and/or unfair expectations or “rules” for his or her partner. This is compounded by a feeling of entitlement to punish or get revenge when the partner doesn’t meet these expectations.

Abusers do an excellent job of managing their anger when they choose to do so; for example, they manage their anger with their bosses or in a tense confrontation with someone at a club. Abusers *choose* not to manage their anger with their partners. Abusing is not about loss of control, but rather maintaining it. Anger management alone does not get to the root of intimate partner violence; that is, the issues of power and control and one person’s need and/or perceived right to dominate another.

Anger management alone does not address the underlying attitudes and belief systems that allow abusers to make the choices that they do. Anger management fails to account for the premeditated controlling behaviors associated with abuse. Intimate partner violence is often a series of behaviors inflicted on the victim through direct and indirect controlling and degrading behaviors. It is not merely a series of impulsive, angry incidents but often a premeditated system of control.

In sum, anger management programs have little impact on the motivations of abusers and, if used as a “quick-fix” for domestic violence, may endanger victims.

	ANGER MANAGEMENT	ABUSER INTERVENTION
Length	Approximately 3 to 8 weeks	Approximately 6 to 10 months
Program Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stress reduction ▪ Cool-down techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Power & Control dynamic in relationship ▪ How anger is used to control partner ▪ Identifying and changing underlying attitudes and beliefs that promote violence
Victim of Abuse	Anyone	Intimate Partner
Program Victim Contact	None	Victims contacted by mail and phone to ensure ongoing safety, provide information about program and offer service referrals
Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Behaviors stems from being provoked ▪ Quick - Fix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Behavior is learned over time such that behaviors appear reactionary, but are actually premeditated ▪ Abusive behavior is regulated by an estimation of probable consequences, never by provocation ▪ Intimate partner violence is a pattern of behavior, not a single event ▪ Intimate partner violence is shaped and supported by societal, familial, and cultural norms.