

# I Just Get so ...ANGRY!



## “I Just Get So...Angry” - Workbook

It is recommended you read through the book at least once before starting on this workbook.

These workbook activities are in addition to those found at the back of the book itself.

There are five kinds of activities:

- 1) **Did you notice?** - these questions just ask you to look carefully at a page and think about a part of it (though you might like to discuss it with somebody if you can).
- 2) **What do you think?** - these are questions about the story for you to think about and write a response to.
- 3) **Over to you** – these are your chance to respond from your own experience. You might find you have some things in common with Andy.
- 4) **Mindfulness Experiments** - these are activities to try in your daily life away from the book.
- 5) **Key Points** – these are important messages that are worth stopping to consider and maybe talk about.

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**Page 5** - **Over to you** Andy is having a lot of different thoughts after he punches the wall. Do any of these sound familiar to you?

**Page 8-15** – **Did you notice** how Andy helped make the situation worse for himself by the way he reacted in each incident? Andy would probably say something like “Everyone made me really angry that day”. **What do you think** you could point out to him about this?

**Page 17** – **Did you notice** the difference in the two panels on this page? The top one shows how Andy is seeing things. The second one shows things as they really are. What’s the difference? What is Andy doing?

**Page 23** - **Key Points** In this story, the Beast represents Andy’s feelings of anger. He thinks it is much more powerful than he is. Like most of us when confronted by a big unpleasant feeling, he tries to fight it or get away from it. This doesn’t help – all it does is send him deeper into trouble. He has to learn a different way to handle things.



**Page 27-29 - Mindfulness Experiment.** So far, Andy has been rushing from problem to problem, and generally making life more difficult for himself. On this page, he gets the advice to try slowing down, and noticing what is going on in his surroundings. He notices things inside his body, like his heartbeat, then things he can hear outside of himself, and finally sees a light. This is about deliberately choosing to pay attention to our senses, instead of just getting caught up with what is happening in our mind.

So, here is an experiment you can try anywhere, anytime. The more you do it, the easier it will get – and then, you may be able to use this strategy when you are feeling angry.

- 1) Look around and notice what you can see. You could look for things you hadn't noticed, or look for objects of a particular colour, or look at the way the light is falling.
- 2) Listen for what you can hear, both inside yourself (heart, breathing) and outside (nearby and further away).
- 3) Notice what you can feel touching you or in contact with you. Notice your feet on the ground, the temperature of the air against your skin, the feeling of your clothes.
- 4) Then, take some time to just let yourself notice all these things. Just breathe, and let your attention move from feeling to sound to object. If your mind tries to catch your attention with a thought (and it probably will – like “this is stupid” or “I don't know if I am doing this right” or “What is the point of this?”) just notice that, too – here is a sound, here is something I am looking at, here are my feet on the ground, here is a thought...

In time, as you develop this skill (and remember, all skills need practice) you will be more able to observe what you are experiencing without getting so caught up in it. This will give you more space to choose how you want to act, rather than be controlled by your emotions.

**Page 33 – Did you notice** that when the Sea-eagle mentions *dealing* with the beast, Andy automatically assumes it means having to fight? This is part of his overall tendency to see things as hostile (like back on page 17).

**Over to you:** Can you think of some situations where you thought things were more negative than they were? Like maybe you misunderstood what someone said, or thought they were attacking you, and reacted aggressively? (if you can't think of any of your own examples, think about if you have seen anyone else react like Andy).

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**Page 33** – What do you think? We know the Beast represents anger - Why does the Sea-eagle say “I get the feeling its never very far away from you”? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Page 43-45** On these pages the Sea-eagle suggests to Andy that his anger is actually covering over a lot of painful things – in this case, memories.

What do you think? What are the painful memories Andy is covering over?

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Over to you. Unfortunately, pain is part of life. All of us, no matter how smart, or strong, or talented, or loved, will feel the pain that comes from rejection, failure, loss. What pain have you felt? \_\_\_\_\_

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Is it possible that, just like Andy, your anger is covering this up?

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Did you notice? Anger is represented in two ways in the book. The Beast represents one way of seeing anger – as this powerful feeling that seems to take over and control what you think and do. The other way is as the suit of armour Andy wears, which protects him from having to face up to the pain in his life.

Over to you – in your life, has anger been more like the Beast or the Armour? Or both?

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What do you think? Is anger easier to express than other emotions? Especially for guys?

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**Page 48** – Andy gets all caught up in his unhelpful thoughts.

Over to you – are any of his thoughts familiar? What unhelpful thoughts do you notice coming up, especially when you are angry?



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*Noticing them* is about then having choices – basically whether we should keep doing what we are doing (persevere) or change and try something else. We need as much information as we can to make this choice, so we need to be able to clear that fog a little.

**Page 50 Key point:** The sea-eagle says: “You aren’t your thoughts. Just because you think something doesn’t make it so.” Thoughts are just stories or judgements about ourselves and others. They aren’t automatically true just because we think them.

**Pages 51-53 Mindfulness Experiment** Pick an unhelpful thought that pops up for you – it could be “I’m crap”, like Andy, or something else. See the words in your head, and notice how that feels. Then, add the phrase “I notice I am having the thought...” to the front of it. See the whole sentence, and notice how it feels this time (you could also try writing it down on some paper). Many people will feel like the thought is less powerful, as if there is some distance between themselves and the thought. If this doesn’t happen for you, don’t worry. It may still be worth practising this – it is a skill, and skills generally improve with effort.

**Page 54 – Did you notice?** It is a fact that Andy’s father left him – that can’t be changed, and will be painful (maybe forever). But notice the additional thoughts that make the pain worse – Andy has three in particular.

**Over to you** - Is there a painful situation in your life, like this? Something outside of your control? If so, take a moment to consider the extra thoughts you may have about it that make it worse (for example, do you blame yourself in some way?) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Page 57-58 – Mindfulness experiment** – letting your thoughts go by you. Andy practices letting his thoughts float around his feet like fog. This gives him a bit of space between him and them so he can decide what he wants to do – persevere or change tack. There are various ways of practising this. You could picture your thoughts as fog, like Andy, or imagine placing them on leaves drifting down a stream, or onto a conveyer belt, or as text moving across a computer screen.



**Page 59** - [Did you notice?](#) As Andy starts to be more flexible in his thinking, he loses some of the armour. He doesn't need to try to protect himself, he can start to handle his thoughts differently.

**Page 61-62** – [What do you think?](#) – the sea eagle points out that everyone is climbing their own mountain, and that people can respond in many different ways. Climbing a mountain is a metaphor for living your life, trying to get where you want, and be the sort of person you want to be. How has Andy been responding to his journey in life to this point?

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[Over to you](#) - How have you been responding to your own mountain? Are you getting somewhere, or stuck, or lost, or fighting it?

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**Page 64** - [Over to you](#) If you were to take a moment to look back at how far you have come, what would you see? Does it seem like you are more off course than you were in the past? Or can you see the headway you have made?

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**Page 66-68** – [Over to you](#) Changing things, choosing to live our lives differently, takes effort – especially if we are trying to make a big change like not let anger control what we do. One thing that can help provide us the motivation is to consider what the impact of anger has been on our relationships with others. You can see how anger has shut Andy off from his family, and made him less available. How about you? How has acting on anger affected your relationships with family, friends, classmates, others in your community? Here is a chance to think about it – not to simply punish yourself for it, but to see things clearly.

([Mindfulness experiment](#) – as you write this, notice what comes up for you – are there any blaming thoughts? Emotions? Try to just notice them, but keep going with the activity)

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**Page 69-71** – Did you notice how Andy immediately thinks the worse, just like earlier in the book?

What do you think – how does the frozen lake symbolize Andy’s view of his relationship with others? \_\_\_\_\_

Key Point The sea eagle says a really important thing here: “Caring about others, and showing you care, makes you vulnerable” – so yes, there is always a risk of losing a relationship you care about... but *not* caring about anyone doesn’t sound like much of a life.

**Page 73-74** – Over to you: There is another key idea here – you can’t help feeling angry, but you *can* control the actions you take. Now, at this point your mind might say something like “but when I get angry, I can’t control myself!” (just like Andy says)... in which case, you need to get better at reading the signs that you are getting that angry, and act sooner. But first, take a moment to consider some of the ways you tend to have acted with your hands, feet and mouth in the past when you have *acted on anger*.

Hands	
Feet	
Mouth	

Then, think about what actions you could choose to take instead... (and obviously these might vary depending on where you are, and who you are with – but try to come up with some ideas now)

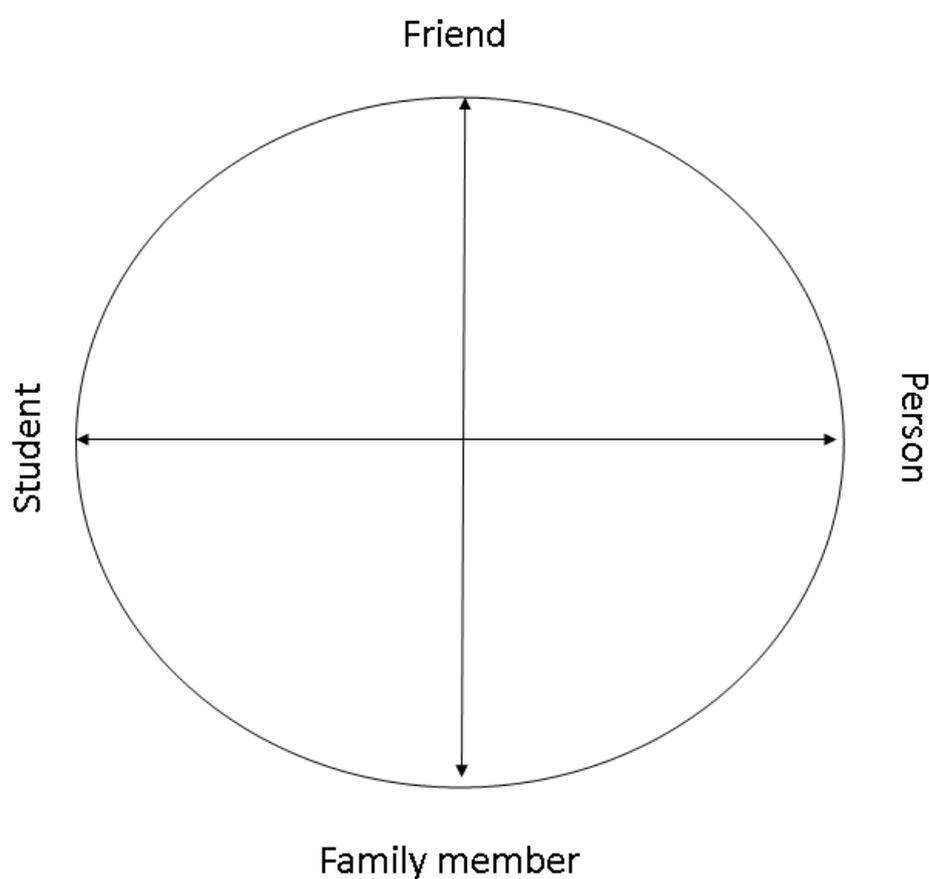
Hands	
Feet	
Mouth	

**Page 75-76** - Mindfulness Experiment – a lot of the techniques we are looking at require you to slow down and make choices. When we are angry, we can feel powerful urges to act in a particular way which is not helpful in the long term (even if it feels good in the short term). To help slow down, the first thing we need to do is *ground ourselves*. Push your feet into the ground. Take a slow deep breath (start by gently pushing all the air out of your lungs, feeling



your chest and stomach muscles engage, then relax and let the air fill your lungs fully). Notice where you are. Notice what thoughts you are having. Notice what urges are present. This is an activity that will become easier with practice. First try it when you are mildly angry, and build from there.

Page 79-86 - [Over to you](#) – Working out what you want to be about...



Each line represents one part of your life. Take a moment to consider what you want to be about in each section. If the outside of the circle represents you at your best, you doing all the things you would wish to in this part of life, and the middle is the starting point, how far out are you? (You could think about the outside being 10/10 and the center being 0/10. So a score of 8 to 10 would mean you felt you were doing a good job of being the sort of person you want to be most of the time, 4 to 6 would mean doing an ok job, 0 to 2 would mean there is a fair bit of work to do).



- 1) Mark each section, where you are now.
- 2) Decide which section you would like to move outwards by one step
- 3) Pick an action you can take
- 4) Consider what thoughts, sensations, urges, feelings may come up as you do this (especially as you can't control how others are going to react – if you are trying something new, it may take others a while to notice and respond)
- 5) Think about why you want this, what values lie underneath this action (this is important – values act as the engine to get us going, and keep us going when things are hard)

**Page 86 – Key Idea** The sea-eagle points out that none of the unpleasant thoughts/feelings/sensations/urges you may experience *have* to act as a STOP sign. It is natural to not want to have any of these, so it seems obvious that stopping whatever you are doing is a good way to make them go away... but what if all that does is keep you stuck? Can you be willing to have these unpleasant experiences if it means you are moving in a direction that is important to you?

**Page 88 - Did you notice** the sea eagle admits to making mistakes sometimes too? That is us, Tim and Sandra, talking, too. We still get angry, and still sometimes act in an unhelpful way on that anger... The important thing is noticing when you are moving in the wrong direction, and then doing what you can to turn things around... Sometimes in a situation, the best thing you can do is to decide *not to make things worse*. *Choosing not to make things worse is still a choice*.

**Page 92-93 - What do you think**: You can see the feelings that are there inside Andy's anger. What is inside yours? It could be:

Frustration sadness confusion boredom anxiety depression fear

Grief loneliness \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the ones that apply to you (or add extras)

[note, if you find it hard to work some of this stuff out by yourself, you could consider talking to someone, like a counselor, to help you]

**Page 95-98 – Did you notice** Andy's first response to the swamp? That is how a lot of people react to facing up to the unpleasant feelings inside: they don't want to face up to them, and that's when anger comes along to push those other feelings aside. But if we are going to be able to handle our anger differently, we need to be aware of those other feelings, and do something about them – we have to get into the swamp. We have to be willing to have them, to get where we want to go. This way, they lose their power over us, and we are in control of where our life is going.



**Page 96** – Yet another [Key idea](#): when we try something, we often don't know if we are going to succeed – this lack of knowing stops a lot of people from doing things they really want to do! If we can accept that we don't know, but that by trying, we are doing something important, something in line with our values, then the attempt itself is definitely worth something.

[Over to you](#) – Is there something new you could try in your life? Maybe something that ties in to your values, but you have previously held back from because you had thoughts like “I don't know if I can do it”, and unpleasant sensations? If so, why not write it down here, and consider using some of the strategies you are learning about in this book to give it a go. Can you follow Andy into the swamp, if it is to get to somewhere good?

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**Page 97-8** – [Did you notice?](#) We know the armour represents the ways Andy's anger has protected him from having to face up to what else he is really feeling. The swamp represents all those other painful feelings – so when he takes off the last of his armour, so that he can move forward in life, it means he finally allows himself to experience those feelings. At first it appears overwhelming, and he feels like he can't handle it (are those words familiar to you? “I can't handle it”?)

**Page 99-102** – [Over to you](#) - Forgiveness is an extremely powerful force for change. It isn't about letting others get away with things, or pretending to forget: it is a deliberate choice to let go, to allow ourselves to be free to live.

### **Forgiving Others**

Are there others in your life, either from now or the past, whom you could consider forgiving today? Remember, you don't have to contact them and tell them – this is a choice you would be making for yourself.

Take a moment to think about this: if you can think of someone, bring them to mind. Allow yourself to feel whatever comes up – notice those feelings, as if they were a wave. Waves build to a point, and then pass us by – feelings can be the same. What thoughts come up about this person? What urges? Then, imagine life in the future if you were not held back by anger at this person – how would you be? Would you be acting differently? Would you feel lighter? What would others notice about you? Would this version of yourself be more like the person you want to be?

Next, gently empty your lungs, and then allow them to fill naturally. Notice how much deeper you can breathe when you do this. Repeat this step a couple of times.



Now, say to yourself, or out loud, or in writing, or art, or whatever form you wish, that you forgive this person. You do not condone what they have done, or like it, or want them to do it again – but you forgive them.

You may find it helps to use a mental image here – of putting something down (like a weight), or releasing something (a balloon?), or letting something go (a leaf on a stream?)

Finally, remember that forgiveness is not as simple as a one-off gesture – it is an ongoing way of being, too.

**Forgiving Self**

(This technique is also useful whenever you are going through a rough time)  
Gently empty your lungs, and then allow them to fill naturally. Notice how much deeper you can breathe when you do this. Repeat this step a couple of times.

Bring to mind five (or more, or less) people who you care about, the ones who have meant most to you in your life (this can include people who have died, and pets, too).

One at a time, imagine them being there with you, placing a hand (or paw) on your shoulder, or wherever you feel the most pain (your head, your chest, your stomach). [You can put your own hand there if you like, and feel the warmth coming from it]  
Imagine this person supporting you, telling you that they are there for you, that they love you. That they want you to forgive yourself.

Allow yourself to feel compassion and care towards yourself. Allow forgiveness. You may deeply regret things you have done in the past – make a decision now to get on with the rest of your life, to not be held back by this regret. Make a choice to take action from this point in line with your values.

**Page 103 – What do you think?** If the mountains represent the struggles and challenges we can face in life, what does this panel mean? Why are there more mountains in the distance? And what do the valleys and rivers and forests represent?

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**Page 104 – What do you think?** Back at the start of the book, Andy thought he had to fight and defeat the Beast. What did he actually have to do, to not be held back by it?



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**Page 105 – [Did you notice?](#)** Andy sums things up nicely when he says “Time to stop reacting and start acting instead.” A lot of what he was doing at the start of the story was reacting to things that happened – or to what he thought was happening. No wonder he was so angry. A far more helpful approach is to work out what you want to be about, and start taking small steps in that direction.

**Page 106-108 – [Did you notice?](#)** Andy still experiences feelings of anger – that is natural. But notice the difference in how he responds to it now, and the differences in how he chooses to act. Feelings come and go, but we are free to choose what actions we are going to take.

One thing he is doing now is allowing himself to appreciate what he has. It is easy to get so caught up in what we *don't* have that we neglect and take for granted those things we *do* have.

[Over to you](#) – A Gratitude Project can be a good way to deliberately take time to notice and appreciate what we have. There are many different ways of doing this – feel free to adapt the following.

Notice on page 108 that Andy expresses his gratitude through actions – doing something nice for the people he cares about. You can do this, by drawing up a list of the people you care about and thinking of actions you could take to express this.

Another way of doing this project is to create something visual. Again, this could be a list of things you are grateful for, or a series of photos, or drawings. You could plan to write/draw/photograph one thing each day that you are grateful for (or aim to do a certain number a week). These could be big things like “my best friend”, to quite small things that were nice that day. They could be qualities (“my teacher’s patience”), actions (“she really listened to me”), objects (“my MP3 lets me listen to my music nearly anywhere”), things in nature (“the tree in my back yard”), things about you (“good sense of humour”), anything that you can be grateful for.

So, here we are at the end of the workbook. And the one thing we can definitely guarantee is that you will still get angry... But hopefully you can have a different experience of your anger now that allows you to notice all the things that go with it, and lets you decide what actions you are going to take.



Remember, it is the most human thing in the world to go off course for a while: the key is to notice, and gently bring yourself back in line with your values. Let your actions say who you really are.

Dip back into this book as often as you need to.

Good luck!