

Handout 6.5: Aggressive Behavior: Reasons, Payoffs, and Consequences

REASONS

1. **Confusion between a feeling and an action.** It is often not understood that anger is a feeling and aggression is a behavior. Feelings are acceptable, but aggressive behavior is not.
2. **Prior non-assertion.** Anger builds up, you feel that your rights have been violated too many times, and you feel righteous and indignant. Hurt and tension explodes.
3. **Sense of superiority and self-righteousness.** You feel that you are standing up for what is right, and that aggression is justified.
4. **Need to control and dominate.** You feel that by controlling the other person, you can get your way and make things right. Your motto is "Attack before you are attacked."
5. **Overreaction due to past emotional experiences.** Unresolved emotions are inappropriately played out in present situations.
6. **Mistaken view of aggression as desirable.** You believe that aggression is the best way to get your needs met, make things right, and get people to act the way you want them to.
7. **Skills deficit.** You have not learned ways to manage your anger, possess low frustration tolerance, and don't know how to control your impulses.

PAYOFFS

1. Aggression lets off steam; it's easier in the short run to "let it out."
2. Aggression feels superior and righteous.
3. Aggression seems to show that you are strong, hiding your weakness and vulnerability.
4. Aggression gets your needs met, your way.
5. Aggression allows you to blame others so you don't have to take responsibility for your behavior.

CONSEQUENCES

1. Aggression alienates others, and then leaves you feeling isolated.
2. Aggression often leads to your feeling guilty later.
3. Aggression leads to conflict-ridden relationships.
4. Aggression keeps you harboring negativity and resentment.