RM Partners
NW & SW London Cancer Alliance

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NHS
St George's, Epsom and St Helier
University Hospitals and Health Group

Community Cancer Partners

Psychological Skills Resource Pack

Contents

1. Your Role as a Community Cancer Partner

Your role is to:

- ✅ Start conversations
- ✅ Build trust
- ✅ Share information
- ✅ Encourage informed choice
- ✅ Signpost support

Your role is NOT to:

- ❌ Diagnose symptoms
- ❌ Deliver clinical advice
- ❌ Provide counselling
- ❌ Persuade people to change
- ❌ Carry responsibility for solving everything

2. Communication Skills Quick Guide

People are more likely to engage when they feel:

- Heard
- Respected
- Understood
- Not judged
- Not rushed

Core Skills

- Active Listening
- Reflecting
- Paraphrasing
- Summarising
- Empathy
- Exploration
- Clarification

3. Asking Helpful Questions

Open Questions

"What have you heard about bowel screening?"

"How do you feel about that?"

"What concerns you most?"

Exploring Questions

"Tell me more about that."

"What gets in the way?"

"What would make it easier?"

Building on Strengths

"What has helped before?"

"What are you already doing well?"

"Who supports you?"

Try to Avoid

- Multiple questions at once
- Leading questions
- Judgemental questions
- Rapid fire questioning

4. What Success Looks Like

Success is NOT:

❌ Someone immediately changes

❌ Someone agrees with us

❌ Someone stops smoking today

❌ Someone completes screening tomorrow

Success IS:

✅ Starting a conversation

✅ Increasing reflection

✅ Building trust

✅ Helping someone think differently

✅ Supporting informed choice

5. Understanding Behaviour Change: COM-B

Behaviour is more likely when someone has:

Capability - Can I do it?

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Confidence

Opportunity - Am I able to do it?

- Time
- Money
- Access
- Support

Motivation - Do I want to do it?

- Importance
- Beliefs
- Readiness

Ask Yourself

"What might be getting in the way here?"

rather than

"Why won't they do it?"

6. Motivational Conversations

Curiosity Beats Persuasion

People are more likely to change when they hear their own reasons for change.

Four Guiding Questions

1. Why might this matter to you?
2. What are your best reasons for change?
3. How important is it?
4. How could you do it?

Remember

- Ask more.
- Tell less.
- Guide rather than direct.

7. Supporting Small Steps

SMART Goals

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant
- **T**ime-bound

Example:

Instead of:

"I'm going to completely change my lifestyle."

Try:

"I'm going to walk for 20 minutes twice this week."

8. Cultural Humility

Be Curious, Not Certain

You do not need to be an expert in every culture.

Instead:

- ✅ Be respectful
- ✅ Be curious
- ✅ Avoid assumptions
- ✅ Learn from the individual

Ask Yourself

- What assumptions might I be making?
- What matters most to this person?
- What am I curious about?

Diagram by
Dr Juliet Young

9. Responding to Myths and Misinformation

Curiosity Before Correction

1. **Explore**

"Tell me more about that."

2. **Understand**

"Where have you heard that?"

3. **Acknowledge**

"I can understand why people might think that."

4. **Ask Permission**

"Would it be okay if I shared some information?"

5. **Inform Briefly**

Keep it short, factual and respectful.

10. Why Conversations Can Feel Emotional

People may be thinking about:

- Family experiences of cancer
- Fear of diagnosis
- Previous losses
- Stigma
- Shame
- Past experiences with healthcare

Remember:

People are often responding to what cancer means to them, not just the information being discussed.

11. The 4Rs Framework

RECOGNISE → Notice distress.

REFLECT → Use reflective listening.

RESPOND → Validate feelings.

REFER → Help people access additional support.

RECOGNISE: Low Mood

Common signs to look out for...

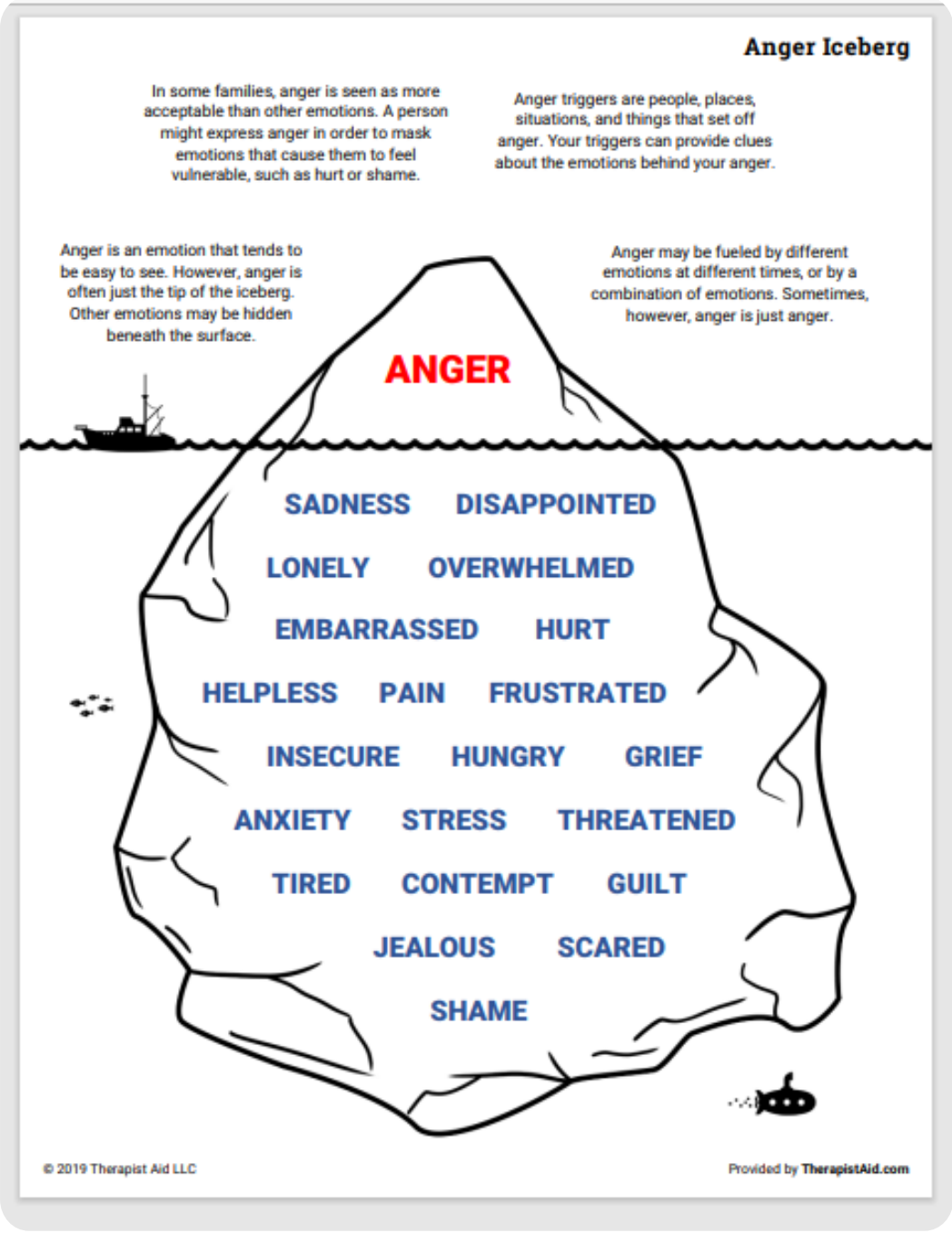
- Sadness/low mood
- Appetite and weight changes
- Changes in sleep pattern
- Loss of enjoyment in things
- Loss of concentration
- Lack of energy/motivation
- Withdrawing socially/isolating self
- Irritability

Key words:

"hopeless", "pointless", "worthless", "low" "fed up" "no motivation"

RECOGNISE: Anger and Frustration

These can often be the “first” emotion to be expressed, when underneath there is deep fear, sadness etc



RECOGNISE: Anxiety

Common signs to look out for…

- Physical sensations of anxiety
- Feelings of panic
- Excessive worries about future
- Racing thoughts – hard to distract from
- Vigilance, restlessness or agitation
- Sleep disturbance
- Poor concentration, irritability
- Avoidance (e.g. missing appointments)
- Excessive reassurance-seeking

Key words:

“tense”, “wound up”, “panicky”, “restless”, “overwhelmed”, “scared”

12. Active Listening

Reflection

- Repeating the person's words

Paraphrasing

- Repeating back in your own words what you have heard from the other; shows empathy, checks understanding, reflects back to the person for them to re-hear/reflect on

Summary

- Restating the main points that you heard to confirm understanding

Empathy

- Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what other people feel, see things from their point of view, and imagine yourself in their place. Essentially, it is putting yourself in someone else's position and feeling what they are feeling.
- "It sounds as if it has all been very hard for you lately."
  "From what you have said, I get the sense that you have been feeling pretty low."
  The understanding is NOT from the healthcare professional's point of view.
- For example: "I know how you feel. I understand how you feel."

Clarification

- "To check I've understood you correctly, are you saying that …"

Challenging discrepancy

- "You say that you want to go home as quickly as possible, but you have also said that you cannot be on your own and your daughter cannot help. Can we talk about this?"

Exploration

- "Could you give me an example of that?

Silence/ Pauses

Encouragement/Minimal Prompts

- "Really, that is interesting. Please do go on."

13. Helpful Validation Statements

Try:

"I can see this is really worrying you."

"It makes sense that you're feeling anxious."

"Many people would find that difficult."

"That sounds really challenging."

Less Helpful

"Don't worry."

"You'll be fine."

"Try not to think about it."

14. Exploring Coping

Useful Questions:

- What's helping right now?
- Who is supporting you?
- What has helped before?
- What do you need most today?
- Would it be helpful if...?

Remember:

Support is about helping people access their own strengths and resources.

15. Signposting and Referral

Possible options include:

- GP
- NHS Talking Therapies
- Cancer support services
- Local charities
- National charities
- Psycho-oncology services
- Community support groups

Further information located in the signposting document.

16. Risk and Safeguarding

If someone talks about suicide or self-harm:

- Stay calm
- Listen
- Take concerns seriously
- Follow organisational procedures
- Use safeguarding pathways
- Seek support when needed

Asking about suicidal thoughts does not increase risk.

17. Looking After Yourself

You cannot pour from an empty cup.

Helpful Self-Care

- Take breaks
- Use supervision
- Debrief after difficult conversations
- Maintain boundaries
- Seek peer support
- Make time for activities that replenish you

Quick Reference

1. **Communication**

   Listen more than you talk.

2. **Behaviour Change**

   Explore capability, opportunity and motivation.

3. **Myths**

   Curiosity before correction.

4. **Emotions**

   Recognise → Reflect → Respond → Refer.

5. **Conversations**

   Guide, don't persuade.

People change when they feel heard