



Recovery International

“Recovery International Clarifying Angry and Fearful Thoughts vs. Angry and Fearful Temper” Accessibility Video Transcript

Accessibility Transcript

The following is a transcript of the audio from Recovery International Clarifying Angry and Fearful Thoughts vs. Angry and Fearful Temper. This transcript is provided to improve accessibility for visitors who are deaf, hard of hearing, or prefer reading the content.

So again, welcome everybody. I’m Judi Bakke. I’m here in San Diego, California. I’ve been a part of Recovery for over 25 years. I lead a meeting in person on Tuesday nights here in San Diego. And I put this special session together because there is a need to go over the difference in angry and fearful thoughts and angry and fearful temper. So, I thought we could have a session on it and then have a round table discussion for anybody that wants to bring up any points that they’ve discovered between the two.

So, as I just mentioned, our topic today is clearing up the confusion between angry and fearful thoughts and angry and fearful temper during a Recovery International example. The purpose of today’s special topic is that we know as group members, or even ourselves we can sometimes confuse the terms angry and fearful thoughts with angry and fearful temper. It’s like well, what’s the difference? Am I saying my temper in Step 2 or thoughts in Step 2? I’m not sure where, you know, where are these two phrases and how they fit in. So hopefully we’ll clear up the confusion, and we can all be better Recovery International spotters and we can give better examples. And if any of you are Recovery Leaders, you know, it’s going to help you be able to lead an example and feel a little bit more confident about when and where we say temper versus thoughts. So, we are clarifying the difference today and we’ll understand where each term belongs in the RI 4-step Method. And like I mentioned it’ll help improve our own examples and it’ll help us better use our Recovery tools.

We know that Recovery is still sticking to what Dr. Low advised his patients to do. That’s the strength of our Method that we are still all doing the same thing during all of our meetings and we’re running them the same, and the example period is always the same four steps. So, I hope that’s not very confusing to anybody. But let’s see.

So as we know the Recovery International example is a 4-step Method. In Step 1 we talk about what happened and in Step 1 we want to report a single event or situation that got us worked up. And we

keep Step 1 brief and to the point. And we know that we like to leave out that example givers should leave out any unnecessary details and exaggerations, you know, because that can work us back up into the situation again. So, we're to report our examples and not to complain.

So, after Step 1, we move on to Step 2 and that's where we report to the group our physical and mental symptoms. And mental and physical symptoms can be very intense as we know, and we'll go over a little bit about that in a minute.

Step 3, we go into our spotting of our temper and our use of the Recovery International tools. And then we can also remember - I should have put that on here - but we need to endorse ourselves in Step 3.

And then in Step 4, of course, is a big endorsement because you use need to describe how you were before Recovery and how you reacted to the situation and its resolution after Recovery. So hopefully seeing those differences is a big self-endorsement for you when you give a Recovering International example. I know a lot of times when you hear an example as a leader or a member, and sometimes it's just like such a big difference between Steps 3 and 4 that you just really can't help but cheer that person for making such a business of their mental health and really getting some gains with Recovery.

So, what we're going to do today is we're really going to just focus on Steps 2 and 3. So, Step 2 as I mentioned, we report our physical symptoms to the group. After Step 1 - which should be brief and to the point and not dramatic - we say "that's when I got worked up." And my physical symptoms were maybe you had muscle tenseness, an upset stomach, sweating or heat. A lot of times people feel that heat in the face like a blushing, maybe a little trouble breathing, some light-headedness, restlessness, like you want to leave the room or you just can't feel like you're settling in. And our symptoms can be mild or very intense. So, what you just really want to remember about reporting your physical symptoms are that your focus is on what you felt in the moment. And it was explained to me that we report our physical symptoms and how we felt. So, the next time we get worked up, we can see, oh, I'm starting to feel uncomfortable in my stomach or I'm starting to feel restless in my seat. You know, that I think I'm getting worked up. So, it kind of gives you like a baseline so that you know the next time when you start to get worked up, you can recognize those physical symptoms. Because thoughts can go so fast that maybe we don't even realize we're in symptoms. But if you pay attention to your physical symptoms, that can tell you a lot.

So, going on to the next slide. So, in Step 2, this is where we report our angry and fearful thoughts. So, these are the thoughts that we reveal to the group in Step 2 - all of those racing thoughts that are going through our mind in that moment. These are our temperamental thoughts, and we know that these temperamental thoughts are usually both angry and fearful. Now some of us can see highlight the angry thoughts quicker than our fearful thoughts, but usually we find that there's always both angry and fearful thoughts that make up our temperamental thoughts during the event. So, when we give our

thoughts, it's very important to be as honest as we can about our thoughts. You know, sometimes we want to skip over this part, you know, and just say, "Yeah, I had some angry thoughts, or I had some fearful thoughts" And go on to Step 3. But really it helps the group spot and if you really explain what you were thinking in that moment, you know, what is it exactly are you thinking. "Oh, I'm late and everybody is staring at me now, coming into the room late. I'm embarrassed because I'm late." You know, you really want to try to say what you're thinking at that time. or you hear a speaker and you go, "Gosh, that person is so at ease up there in front of the whole group. I'm never like that when I'm in front of a group." Or "I hope they don't call on me." So, it's very important that you can get to the root or the actual thoughts that you're thinking at that time, you know. And in Step 2, we don't need to analyze our reaction or give it a name. We just want to describe it. We don't have to name it. So, we don't need to spot we're in temper during Step 2. That comes later in Step 3. And we don't over dramatize our Step 2 - either our thoughts or our sensations - because remember uh Dr. Low was, you know, pretty clear about his instructions to his patients. You know if you stop that complaining habit, the symptoms will start going away. You know, complaining about our illness and the feelings and sensations that we get. It was a big part of having symptoms and being a nervous patient. So, we really don't want to overdramatize.

And so, what we want to focus on is what we were thinking in the moment. And sometimes, you know, when you go to give an example, you may not say everything you were thinking at that time or everything you were feeling at that time. You know, that's understandable, but you really kind of want to dig down and try to really get some of those thoughts out there to the group and try to get some of those feelings identified in your body - your tense muscles or is it an upset stomach that you have or do you feel blushing a lot? So, we really want to try to emphasize that people identify and report to the group those things that we were thinking and feeling in the moment.

So then again in Step 2 we would talk about our angry and fearful thoughts, and we just put a few down here. I mean these you know just are examples of what you might say to the group or what the group you might hear as a member listening to somebody else's Recovery example. But people might say, "Oh, how could I have said that I am so embarrassed." You know, that might be something you report to the group. "I'm so clumsy. I can't believe I spilled my water glass, at the table." You might be at a luncheon or something. "Everybody must be looking at me." If you come in late or do something, or "I messed up. I might lose my job here."

Some of those big links that we have like work and school and money and things like that. You might have these deep-seated worries about things, and you just want to try to pull those out and tell the group those thoughts. When in Step 2, we might be able to identify some angry thoughts like, "That guy is so rude" or "She doesn't know what I'm what she's talking about." "This is unacceptable and I should complain to the manager." These are just examples of thoughts that we would reveal to the group and these are the thoughts that go through our mind you know during that Step 2. There's no right or wrong type of thoughts that we have, you know, so don't feel like you're going to say or say something

that nobody's ever thought before. I mean everybody's kind of the same - we all share the same nervous system. So, whatever you thought in that moment, feel pretty confident that somebody else has thought something similar in a situation that maybe that was similar or would invoke the same types of thoughts. So don't feel embarrassed or feel that you're not saying the right thing because we're all pretty much the same.

So, what's important here is that in Step 2, we don't spot that we're in temper. See these are two examples of angry thoughts and fearful thoughts. They're not telling the group I was so mad at him I couldn't believe it. You know we don't need to label our temper in Step 2. Step 2 is just describing everything to the group. You know, it's not we're not spotting on anything or identifying anything. We're just describing it. The word that we read in the four steps is "report." Report a single event. So, we're just reporting what we were thinking and feeling in that group. So, we don't label it or say we are in angry or fearful thoughts. So, try not to say I was angry or I was fearful. So that's kind of helpful for you because I think that people if you say that I was really mad. You know that one in the book *Mental Health Through Will-Training* when the mother asked the son to mail the letter. If he would have just said, "Oh I was so mad at her" and then moved on in the example, we would never have that that rich background. "Oh, she can do it herself, but she always tries to be domineering." That was what he thought that his mother was trying to do. So, remember, if you just say you were mad or angry, we're not getting what you think. Why were you mad? I mean, if somebody asked you to mail a letter, that's nothing to get angry about. But then in that example in the book, he talks about how she's tries to be domineering and things like that. So that's why you want to bring up Step 2. I mean bring out your thoughts during Step 2 rather than just your you know labeling it as anger or fear or your fearful temper.

Maybe you're excessively worried about finances so you would want to explain those thoughts that are running through your brain during Step 1 that are getting you into symptoms instead of just saying, "Oh I was I'm fearful." So that doesn't really help the group. It doesn't really help you understand what some of your angry and fearful temper really is all about. You know, we want to get down to the root of it. So, what we do in Step 2 is we report our racing thoughts honestly to the group and we can include temperamental thoughts such as "she always does this" or "what's wrong with him?" You know, that's kind of those temperamental thoughts. "This is the worst situation ever," you know, because the group or even you can spot the sabotage in Step 3. But if that's how you were feeling and thinking in during Step 2 or when the event occurred, then you want to report on that. And you know we don't use any extreme language or anything that's any cursing or anything like that, but if you have thoughts like "this always happens" or "this is the worst," go ahead and express that to the group.

So, we talked a lot about reporting our thoughts - our angry and fearful thoughts - and our feelings and sensations. So now we're on Step 3. So, I hope this is making sense to everybody. We're going to have a couple practice sessions after the slides are over. So, if you have any questions, we'll get to that in a minute. But Step 3 is when you finally realize that you're in temper, right? Because you're stopping for

a moment and you're starting to spot. So, this is when you spot your angry and fearful temper because up to this point, you're just kind of going with your reaction to the situation or the person or the event. So, Step 3 is the step where our insights are reported. Right? This is when Dr. Low and Recovery language really step in to help us. So we realize our emotional states and report to the group "I am angry with him or I'm angry at her or the situation." You know I finally spotted hey I have angry temper or I have fearful temper. I was fearful I was wrong and that's you know why in Step 1 you got worked up.

So, Step 3 is really that point where Recovery kicks in and we realize that we're in temper and we know that temper can be angry and fearful temper. I think most of these are on our 4-step Method we have or on the concept review. You can have these descriptions of the different types of fearful temper. You know, an example giver may or may not use these words that are given to us, but it's very kind of helpful that there's different types of fearful temper or angry temper. You know, they range in intensity and your fearful temper may appear as embarrassment, or you may be worried about the future or worried about the situation won't get resolved or maybe you're discouraged. You know, I cleaned the floor. My kitchen floor right now is dirty. So, let's say "I clean the floor in the kitchen, and then I spilled something tonight when I was making dinner, you know?" So, that could be like a discouraging thing like how can I be so clumsy after I spent all that time cleaning? Or you might feel hopeless. This situation is never going to change. it's always going to be like this. So those are the types of fearful temper we may experience when we're in that event.

And then the other side of course is the angry temper and it may appear as maybe some types of resentment against others or maybe the situation or impatience that you know something's not getting resolved or disgust or hostility. These are all types of angry and fearful temper. And again, don't feel, you know, shy about revealing these things because we all have the same nervous system and we've every thought or feeling has probably been felt and thought by somebody throughout time. So don't you know don't feel that you feel embarrassed or that you don't want to reveal something about yourself. So, it's when we can really the more honest we are in a Recovery meeting and giving an example, the better that you'll get. You know you'll be able to do better spotting for yourself and the group will really be able to spot for you. And you know, sometimes when you reveal something, a person in that meeting might go, "Oh my gosh, I felt like that. I didn't know other people did." And you're really making a difference in the life of somebody in somebody else's life by being honest in your own example. So, that's what we do in spot in Step 3 is spot our tempers.

So, we use our tools during Step 3. So, we share the tools and the spots that we used. You know some of us have been in Recovery for a long time. We might have a huge encyclopedia of spots in our mind. Others may just want to have a couple spots that they like, you know. And spots can be regional, too. I heard somebody say this the other day on a Zoom meeting because maybe a spot is very popular. You hear it at several meetings you go to on the east coast, but here on the west coast maybe we haven't heard as often. So, we want to share those tools and spots and the tools and spots that we use will reduce our temper and that's why we come to our meetings and help us regain control. Every act of self-

control leads to self-respect. We want to be able to bring our emotional state back to “normal” for lack of a better word. So, why this happens is because we are spotting on our example. We're reframing the event. It's something that we can just report. It's not an emergency anymore. It's not a disaster. We can take all those words out of it. We're going to reframe it as just a simple everyday event that happens every day - it's a triviality. And what we're doing is changing our self-talk. You know, we come to Recovery and talk about trivial things, but if you can get a handle on trivial things that work you up, you're going to be able to handle some of the bigger things. I've seen that, you know, myself. Some of the bigger events that may not be appropriate for a Recovery meeting. I've been able to apply Recovery tools and get my nervous system to calm down and back to the way it was.

The key distinctions between Step 2 and 3. In Step 2, our thoughts are what runs through our mind - completely without any description words that are being applied or identifying identifiers as temper. And then Step 3 is when you do talk about your temper and that's the emotional state we identify. So, Recovery really is a simple Method. It's simple but not easy. And we know the formula that thoughts will lead us into temper, but spots lead us out of temper. So, we know that our it's our racing thoughts that get us into trouble. It's not the event, but it's our attitude towards it, right? Because people can have similar events and they can have a totally different response to the event. It's what you think about in that moment that leads to temper. Why are we here today listening to me go on and on?

So, the clear examples will help the group better understand what your experience was in Step 1 and will offer more useful tools to you as the example giver. You can listen to the tools and maybe hear things that are a little bit more in-depth or can help you and they can also help you find the sabotage in your example. So better clarity in your RI example gives equals better Recovery. So, that's a good slide to remember. Better clarity gives better recovery.

Let's Practice

You come home from work, and you find a pile of dirty dishes in the sink left by family members. And you can see the dishes there. So, we're going to uh take off slide view and we're going to talk about what some of our thoughts would be in that moment. Maybe thoughts like, “You know, everyone in his family is so lazy and they're just finally leaving it all for me to do. I have to do everything here. I've told them I'm just going to leave them there.” “I can't believe this is happening. This is not the first time. It's, you know, this keeps happening poor me. Why does this always have to happen to me? That's a good one.

You're stuck in traffic and you're late for your doctor appointment that took you months to schedule. What might your thoughts be and what might your temper or emotions be in a situation like that? “I'm going to be late and I'm going to be thrown out of the practice. They're not going to see me again. They won't see me and I'll have to wait months for another appointment. Why can't traffic move faster? Why didn't I leave 10 minutes earlier? Why am I always running late? What are they going to think of me when I get there? They're going to look at me like, ‘Here she is again. She's late.’ I would be very angry



at the hold up and think there's somebody way up there in front of me that is has done something to hold up the traffic and I would be very angry at them.

Well, I hope everybody enjoyed today's discussion and I hope people feel they have some clarity, and I hope everybody's endorsing for coming and I was glad to see everybody's smiling faces today. Have a good night.

Accessibility Note

This transcript is intended to accompany the audio recording so that all visitors have access to the same information in a text format.