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| **Dealing with offending behaviour: Anger management**  |
| **Anger management AO1** |
| **Cognitive behaviour treatment**Raymond Novaco (1975) suggests that cognitive factors trigger the emotional arousal which generally proceeds aggressive acts. His argument is that, in some people, anger if often quick to surface especially in situations that are perceived to be anxiety-inducing or threatening. In behaviourist terms, becoming angry is reinforced by the individuals feeling of control in that situation. As such, anger management programmes are a form of cognitive behaviour therapy – the individual is taught how to recognise when they are losing control, and then encouraged to develop techniques which bring about conflict-resolution without the need for violence.  |
| **Three stages**1. **Cognitive preparation:** This phase requires the offender to reflect on past experience and consider the typical pattern of their anger. The offender learns to identify those situations which act as triggers to anger and, if the way in which the offender interprets the event is irrational, the therapists role is to make this clear. For instance, the offender may view someone looking at them or their partner as as act of confrontation. In redefining the situation as non-threatening, the therapist is attempting to break what may be an automatic response for the offender.
2. **Skill acquisition:** In this stage offenders are introduced to a range of techniques and skills to help them deal with anger-provoking situations more rationally and effectively. Techniques may be cognitive; positive self-talk to encourage calmness; behavioural: assertiveness training in how to communicate more effectively, and physiological: methods of relaxation and/or mediation. The latter particularly promotes the idea that it is possible for the offender to be in control of their emotions rather than ruled by them.
3. **Application practice:** In the final phase, offenders are given the opportunity to practise their skills within a carefully monitored environment. Such role play is likely to involve the offender and the therapist re-enacting scenarios that may have escalated feelings of anger and acts of violence in the past. This requires a certain amount of bravery from the therapist whose job is to ‘wind up’ the offender in order to assess their progress! Successful negotiation of the role play would be met with positive reinforcement from the therapist.
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| **An example**Julia Keen et al (2000) has studied the progress made with young offenders aged between 17 and 21 who took part in a nationally recognised anger management programme. First devised in 1992 and updated in 1995, the *National Anger Management Package* was developed by the England and Wales Prison Service. The course comprises eight two hour sessions, the first seven over a three-week period with the last session a month afterwards, and the content broadly accords with that which is described above. Although there were initial issues in terms of offenders not taking the course seriously, and individuals forgetting routines such as the requirement to bring their diary, the final outcomes were generally positive. Offender’s reported increased awareness of their anger management difficulties and an increased capacity to exercise self-control.  |
| **Anger management AO3** |
| **Eclectic Approach**P: One strength of anger management as a technique used to rehabilitate offenders is that it uses a multi-dimensional, eclectic approach.E: For example, it uses cognitive preparation (identifying precursors of anger), behavioural perspective (techniques of self-management in phase two), and a social approach is adopted in phase three when offenders are required to demonstrate what they have learnt during role play.E: This is a strength because this multi-disciplinary approach acknowledges that offending is a complex social and psychological activity, and any attempt to address it should include all of the above elements to correctly address the issue.L: As a result, the effectiveness of anger management is strengthened.  | **Deals with the Root Cause** P: One strength of anger management as a technique used to rehabilitate offenders is that it deals with the root cause of the issue.E: For example, anger management tries to tackle one of the causes of offending, rather than focusing on the superficial surface behaviour.E: This is a strength because offenders do not just learn passive skills, they gain new insight into the cause of their criminality enabling them to self-discover ways of managing themselves outside of the prison setting. It is therefore logical to assume that anger management is more likely than behaviour modification techniques to lead to a permanent behavioural change and lower rates of recidivism.E:  | **Limited long-term effectiveness** P: However, one weakness of anger management as a technique used to rehabilitate offenders is that evidence suggest it may not be as long-lasting as once thought.E: For example, Blackburn (1993) suggests that whilst anger management may have a noticeable effect on short-term behaviour of offenders, there is very little evidence to suggest that recidivism is reduced.E: This is a weakness because it suggests therefore that the application of techniques such as artificial role play do not properly reflect all the possible triggers that could present in real life. Although much of the programme is delivered outside of prison walls, it has very little similarity to a busy city centre on a Saturday night.L: As a result, the overall effectiveness of anger management as a rehabilitation technique for offenders is reduced. | **Expensive**P: One weakness of anger management as a technique used to rehabilitate offenders is that it is expensive to implement.E: For example, anger management requires the services of highly trained professionals/specialists who are used to dealing with violent offenders. E: This is an issue because hiring a specialist means paying for the service, and many prisons do not have access to the necessary levels of funding for such programmes, meaning that many offenders will never have access to these programmes. L: As a result, the appropriateness of the strategies behind anger management programmes are questioned. |