



# RELAX: ALTERNATIVES TO ANGER

EXAMINING THE BENEFITS OF LATINO PARTICIPATION IN AN ANGER MANAGEMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

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# ANGER MANAGEMENT EDUCATION (AME)

- AME Purpose: Focus on frequency and intensity of individuals anger
  - Content: Defining anger, coping strategies, identifying causes of anger, anger management strategies, and reactions to anger.
- Targeted populations: Incarcerated, delinquent youth, and therapeutic
  - Latinos Inmates

# RELAX: ALTERNATIVES TO ANGER

- Purpose: To examine the experiences of Spanish-speaking, Latino participants in RELAX
- RELAX: Actively engage adult participants in gaining knowledge and skills to deal with anger.
  - 4 Module program - small and large group settings
- Core concepts of RELAX:
  - Recognizing anger signals and calming down
  - Communication and empathy
  - Accepting and letting go of anger

# QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS – FOCUS GROUP

- 5 focus groups
- N=36
  - 30 female, 6 male; Ages 30 – 93 years
- Semi-structured, open-ended questions
- 5 Researchers
  - Thematic analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007)
- Results: 6 major themes and subsequent subthemes

# ANGER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Calming mechanisms

“One thing that I am learning now is reading...It takes away all the ire I have inside of me” *[Male, age 35]*

- Communication

“I am in a moment when I need to know how to dialogue with another person” *[Female, age 36]*

- Empathy

“Sometimes we think people are mad but they are tired...I should see if there is something I can do to help them” *[Female, age 40]*

- ‘Think before I act’

“It helps us reflect on if we are doing this wrong and try to improve.” *[Female, age 53]*

# UNDERSTANDING ANGER

- Recognizing their anger

“Anger is a feeling, and we can handle it in different ways without hurting others” *[Female, age 38]*

“We have never been taught how to express our feelings by name...[Anger], it is not just one, two, or three emotions” *[Female, age 31]*

- Physical reactions to anger

“I was always tired or had a headache. I would ask myself ‘Why?’. Now, I realize that every time I am angry, or stressed, my body reminds me” *[Female, age 36]*

# IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS

## ■ Parent-child relationship

“Mexicans need a lot of information regarding anger to improve our community, our kids, and the family”  
*[Female, age 46]*

“I have to think of the kids and their feelings” *[Female, age 42]*

## ■ Couple relationship

“They [her partner] say what they think, and you say what you think, and we can come to an agreement”  
*[Female, age 52].*

“It should be given to those in marriages; the couple together” *[Female, age 52]*

# SOCIAL SUPPORT AND LESS STRESS

## Social Support

“It is very important that we have been able to express what we feel and what we have gone through”  
*[Male, age 67]*

“I liked every lesson, it was like therapy” *[Female, age 54]*

## Less Stress

“I like that I learned that the anger of others is not my problem. That causes me a lot of stress”  
*[Female, age 31]*

“[We need to learn] how to overcome stress, because not all of us are able to overcome it in the same way”  
*[Male, age 35]*

# CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF ANGER

- Anger is inherent part of the Latino culture

“I see that a lot of our people [Latinos], it is very easy to get angry...We see anger as something normal and that it was inherited to us” [*Female, age 36*].

“I think we, the Latinos, we blow up real fast with little things” [*Female, age 77*].

- Seeking help is highly stigmatized

“In our culture it is said that you are a bad person or it is wrong if you are mad. We are taught in our families it looks bad... In our culture, we do not talk about it [anger] at all. It is not something that we can say.” [*Female 54*]

- Anger is common

“It is hard for the Latinos to relax because we are used...They get mad instantly, and it is hard to learn to relax and not show the strong anger they have” [*Male, age 69*].

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

- Talking and learning about anger is important
  - *Simpatia* – being agreeable and repressing one's anger (Applewhite, 1998; Ernst, 1992)
- Improving family relationships
  - *Familism* –close relationships and collectivism (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002)
- Cultural influences and perceptions
  - Anger is normal, generational, and related to life circumstances
  - *Machismo* – Standard of behavior exhibited by Latino men (Arciniega, et al., 2008)

## QUESTIONS

- How can educators better tailor AME programming for Latino audiences given the cultural relevance of anger as described by participants in this study?
- What barriers and possible solutions should practitioners consider when designing and facilitating AME programming for Latino audiences?