

NOTES TO TEACHERS AND DISCUSSION LEADERS

Ground rules for cooperative participation:

Exploring the ways we view and deal with conflicts and anger requires an honest and open exchange of ideas. Participants may feel exposed if they share personal stories within a large group. Leaders need to assure participants of:

- **Confidentiality.** Everyone must agree to treat what is said with respect and to avoid gossip.
- **Respect for ideas.** Everyone should agree that this is a forum in which everyone has the opportunity to share his or her point of view. No attacks. No blaming.

This guide is adaptable to any age group, but group leaders should be sensitive to the make-up of their group and focus on situations supplied in the guide that are familiar to most of its participants.

Key Issues:

- Defining anger
- Managing anger
- Steps to problem-solving
- Non-aggressive communication

BEFORE THE SCREENING

1. Discuss the following statements:
 - Anger is a secondary emotion; a response to a primary emotion such as fear, betrayal, pain.
 - Frustration doesn't cause anger; anger is a choice.
2. What is anger? Ask the group to recall the last time they were really angry with another person. Ask them to identify their own physical responses to anger (clenched teeth, stomach in knots, slurred speech, flushed face etc.). Ask participants to analyze their responses to anger. Do they tend to "attack" or "withdraw" when they are angry? What are the some of the other ways to respond to anger? What are the consequences of each approach?

AFTER THE SCREENING

1. Ask younger viewers to retell the story to determine which elements they caught and which ones they may have missed.
2. Ask viewers to recall or invent situations where a misunderstanding escalated into a larger conflict. What similarities exist in all of these situations?
3. Act out or write down dialogue to accompany the action in the film. What might the gophers be saying?
4. Ask participants to recall points in the video at which the gophers were really angry. Discuss how the gophers responded to their anger. What were the consequences?
5. View the video again and have the group identify (by shouting out) each point in the conflict where one or the other of the gophers could have chosen a different response.
6. How would the situation have been different if the gophers had been able to see each other all along?
7. Brainstorm with the group and ask for several different responses the neat gopher could have made when confronted by the messy gopher, and visa versa. Evaluate the probable consequences of all responses. Are they realistic? Would they have prevented further conflict? Are they fair?
8. Describe anger as a step-by-step process that can end in volatile behavior. Ask participants to think of a situation in which they "exploded" or "seethed" in anger. Use a sheet of paper to plot, in chronological order, the small incidents of a conflict that eventually led to expressions of anger. Include incidents that contributed to mounting tension, even if they were not directly related to the conflict, since anger is often a response to many provocations. Ask participants to come up with alternative responses for every stage of conflict.
9. Act out a scene of conflict, over noise or a mess, between neighbors. Role-play this in two ways; first as neighbors who don't communicate and are driven to angry revenge (such as deliberate sabotage of property, or rumor-mongering); then as neighbors who are better at communicating with each other.
10. Discuss the issue of respecting one another's space. (Note that neither a messy nor a neat work or living space is right or wrong.) Respect involves not imposing conditions on anyone or encroaching on someone else's space.
11. At the end of the video, the gophers are confronted by another dirt-slinger. What can they do to prevent another episode?