

# Philosophy Radio Programme: Anger

## Ideas for using the programme

This programme was made by Steve Williams and children from Kingsland Primary School in Stoke-on-Trent. The topic the children chose to discuss was anger.

### How to use the programme

The pupils in the programme say what they think about anger. They do some spontaneous philosophising – these are their first thoughts, and they haven't been developed or challenged to any great extent through dialogue.

The aim would be to get your own pupils to do some more deliberate philosophising by weighing up the ideas expressed in the programme, taking them further and trying to make them more coherent.

**Step 1: Listening to the programme.** Play the programme to your pupils. It is three minutes long. Ask your pupils to talk to a partner and share their first responses and write a few of them down.

**Step 2: Defining and recognising anger.** In the first 30 seconds of the programme two children talk about what anger is and how you can recognise it in someone. These are the statements they make:

- When someone is distressed and all wound up and they blame someone else, they are angry
- When someone is shouting and screaming, you know they must be angry.

Read out each statement (we have produced a PowerPoint of the statements if you want to use it).

For each statement ask your pupils to repeat it and respond with one of three sentence starters:

- That is not always right because ...
- In my opinion anger is ...
- I agree because ...
- I disagree because ...

If your pupils are not forthcoming you might prompt them with comments like: 'Do you agree that anger always involves blaming someone else?' or 'Does anger always show itself through screaming and shouting?'

Form the class into groups. Challenge each group to create a definition of anger. Let them use dictionaries. Then ask them:

- Could you know if you were angry? If 'yes', how?
- Could you know another person was angry? If 'yes', then how?

**Step 3: Is anger always bad?** The children in the programme have opinions about whether anger is good or bad or whether it can be both. These are some of the statements they make:

- If someone was to tell me anger is always bad, I'd say they were wrong because sometimes you need to express yourself through anger. And that's how you show who you are.
- I think anger can sometimes be a good thing because you don't want to keep it inside. You've got to express yourself and say what you think. But not too much.
- Anger can be a good thing sometimes because say if someone has died you are trying to release the anger of losing them.
- I think it's good to release anger but don't harm anything or anyone.
- Sometimes it isn't a good thing to be angry with someone when they have done it by accident instead of on purpose. So then you can talk about it and forgive them instead of just screaming and shouting.
- Anger is bad when you lose control of things and you get so wound up you lose control of what you are doing and you lash out at people and things.
- The best time to express your anger is when you are alone in a room because that way no-one will be hurt.
- Sometimes you should express your anger and lose control because it'll carry on building up inside you and then eventually you'll lose control anyway and you'll just go mad.
- It's bad if you could see it because people would be ranting and raving and running around screaming and losing control but if it's good anger you might have done something good but you are bit angry that you've done it a bit wrong because you're angry at yourself.

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4. Give them a set of cards with the statements on. We've provided a print-off for you below.

First ask them to choose any statements that they think are just wrong. Ask them to say why they think these statements are wrong. Share those choices and reasons with the whole class.

Statement 1 is particularly interesting. Don't let this go without some examination. Are there times when you 'need' to express yourself through anger? What are some examples of those times? If you need to, does that mean you should? How does anger show you who you are? These questions are especially related to the follow-up options on Aristotle and Plutarch (see below)

The children in the programme start to develop their thoughts on 'good anger' and 'bad anger'. Ask your own pupils to try to complete the work of the children in the programme. To do this, they should discuss the other cards in their groups. Give them the following sentence starter: ***"I like this comment but something is missing and that is ..."***

After these small-group discussions, get the pupils together in one group to discuss the following question:

***"When is anger a good thing and when is it a bad thing?"***

During the discussion, help pupils to make a distinction between *being* angry and *showing anger*. Some might argue that anger in itself is never bad because it can't be helped but that there are better and worse ways of showing anger, ranging from not showing it at all to acting in extreme ways. Ask pupils to suggest examples and counter examples before challenging them to come up with some general rules – even if they can think of exceptions.

Don't force consensus but do prompt pupils to question any general rules that emerge.

#### **Follow-up ideas**

1. This discussion could provide a reference point for conduct in the school.
  2. After this discussion the pupils may be interested in ***Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean***. We have an adapted version of that on P4C.COM and some ideas for using it. Aristotle wrote that: *"it is hard work to be excellent. For in each case it is hard work to find the intermediate: for instance ... getting angry or giving and spending money, is easy and everyone can do it; but doing it to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, for the right end, and in the right way is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it. Hence doing these things well is rare, praiseworthy and fine."* (Nichomachean Ethics, 1109a). For Aristotle, achieving the mean requires training and rational control of one's feelings and capacities.
  3. For older and/or more able pupils, have them read the adapted extracts from **Plutarch's essay on anger** (attached below). It has some interesting analogies that may appeal to you and your pupils. It could be read just for enjoyment or you could invite pupils to respond the points Plutarch makes in ways similar to the exercises on the radio programme. One interesting question would be: ***"Do you think Plutarch is saying that people shouldn't do anything about injustice"***. You might also ask if any of the points Plutarch makes are similar to the ones the children raise in the programme. He certainly seems to associate anger with loss of control.
- One use of this text would be to develop children's vocabulary and possibly their use of analogies.
4. The discussions around this programme may provide a reference point for further discussion of characters in literature.