

Vic: Making an Action Plan to improve his marriage.

Over time, Vic became more confident that Judy really did care about him and wanted him to stay sober. However, Judy had been complaining for many years that she was frustrated by his frequent angry outbursts. She also told him that she missed the nice things he used to do for her early in their relationship. Vic loved Judy and agreed that his anger was causing real problems in their marriage; he also admitted that he could be kinder to her. He really wanted to improve their marriage, so he decided to make an Action Plan:

GOAL: Improve my marriage.

Actions to take	Time to begin	Possible problems	Strategies to overcome problems	Progress
<p>Do five positive things for Judy each day, such as kiss her, give her a compliment, help out, smile at her, massage her neck, ask about her day, call from the office to say, "I love you," bring her coffee.</p>	<p>Today when I get home, and every morning beginning when I wake up.</p>	<p>I could be feeling angry with her.</p>	<p>If I'm angry, I can do easier things (like helping with the dishes, bringing coffee). Use a Thought Record or strategies such as a timeout or imagery (from Chapter 15 of Mind Over Mood) to see if I can reduce my anger.</p>	<p>10/6 – Did 6 positives at night. Felt good. 10/7 – Did 5 positives. Judy hugged me for helping. 10/8 – Felt angry, but did 3 positives anyway. A Thought Record helped.</p>
<p>Reduce angry outbursts (how often and how long it lasts). Reduce to no more than 3 in the first week, 2 in the second week, 1 in the third week, and no more than once a month after that. Try to take a break so I'm not with Judy more than 2 minutes when angry.</p>	<p>Now</p>	<p>A bad day at work, so I arrive home in a bad mood.</p>	<p>Do a Thought Record before leaving the office. Make a plan to handle the work problems before I leave the office. Play good music on the way home. Sit in the car and relax until I feel calm enough to enter the house. Tell Judy that it was a bad day and that I am trying to stay calm. Ask her to help.</p>	<p>10/6 – No problems. 10/7 – Made a plan to handle a work conflict before I left the office. Arrived home pretty relaxed. 10/9 – Played music on the way home. Relaxed for 2 minutes in driveway before going into house. Helped me cope with kids crying without getting angry.</p>

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FIGURE 10.2. Vic's Action Plan.

Actions to take	Time to begin	Possible problems	Strategies to overcome problems	Progress
<p>Reduce anger outbursts (how often and how long it lasts). Reduce to no more than 3 in the first week, 2 in the second week, 1 in the third week, and no more than once a month after that. Try to take a break so I'm not with Judy more than 2 minutes when angry.</p>	<p>Now</p>	<p>When I feel angry, I explode really quickly.</p>	<p>In conversations with Judy, rate my anger 0-10 every minute when I can see it coming.</p> <p>When my anger gets to a 3, tell Judy I need a break for a few minutes to keep calm.</p> <p>When my anger gets to a 5, take a break and write out a Thought Record. Write out what I hear Judy saying and what I believe to be true. Show Judy this summary to check if we understand each other accurately. If I get above a 5 in my anger ratings, tell Judy I need a longer break. Return to the conversation only when my anger is below 3.</p> <p>Take a walk. Review my Thought Records. Remind myself that Judy loves me, that we have worked out lots of problems in the past, and that we can probably solve this problem too.</p>	<p>10/6 - No anger.</p> <p>10/7 - Started to get angry, took 3 timeouts, and eventually finished the conversation. Judy seemed impressed that I was sticking to my plan.</p> <p>10/9 - Lost my temper and shouted at Judy. At least I apologized later.</p>

FIGURE 10.2 (continued from previous page)