

**The Lecture Contains:**

- ☰ Anger management and checking aggression
- ☰ Punishment
- ☰ Catharsis: mixed results about its effect
- ☰ Cognitive interventions
- ☰ Apologies
- ☰ Preattribution to unintentional causes
- ☰ Preventing oneself from ruminating
- ☰ Other relevant techniques

### Anger management and checking aggression

- Anger is an emotion that may lead to the behaviour known as aggressive behaviour. Social psychologists have been concerned about the ways to regulate anger and to check aggressive behaviour. This lecture will elaborate on the following techniques for this purpose :
- Punishment to prevent socially undesirable aggressive behaviour
- Catharsis to vent out anger or aggressive behaviour
- Cognitive interventions such as apologies, preattribution to unintentional causes, and preventing oneself from ruminating
- Other relevant techniques such as the exposure to non-aggressive models, social skills to get along with others, and incompatible responses (humour, empathy etc.)

## Punishment

- The concept of punishment borrowed from the behaviourist psychology may help prevent social undesirable aggressive behaviour. Punishment works on the principles of operant conditioning which posit that the strength of association between the stimulus and the response will be weakened if the consequence of the response is aversive in nature. Therefore, if the consequence of an aggressive behaviour is made painful or aversive for the aggressor, then it is quite likely that his or her aggressive behaviour will be decreased. However, a series of research outcomes on the effectiveness of punishment has revealed that the punishment should be of the following nature :
  - Given immediately after the aggressive behaviour
  - There should be a certainty about punishment given after each aggressive behaviour
  - Punishment should be strong
  - Punishment should also be justified in the eyes of the aggressor

### **Catharsis: mixed results about its effect**

- Catharsis (a concept borrowed in social psychology of aggression from psychoanalysis), is the process of expressing one's aggressive intent in some relatively non-harmful manner. The hypothesis that has been tested by the social psychologists is that catharsis reduces the possibility of aggressive behaviour in its harmful form.
- Research has shown that non-harmful behaviours (such as going for vigorous sports, aggressing at the photograph of an enemy or shouting in foul language in an empty room) that are a substitute to the actual aggressive behaviour have proved to reduce anger. However, such effects have been found to be only temporary and when the person is placed in the actual social setting, the aggressive behaviour may return.
- Furthermore, contrary to the belief that safer aggressive acts such as watching televised violence, attacking an inanimate object or verbal aggression may reduce the chances of aggressive behaviour, research has shown that aggression may actually increase due to such interventions.

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### Cognitive interventions

- Cognitive interventions have focused on the following techniques :
  - Apologies
  - Preattribution to unintentional causes
  - Preventing oneself from ruminating
- While apologies and excuses are oriented towards making attempts to reduce other's anger through the process of appraisal, the other two techniques aim at reducing one's own anger and work on the principle of cognitive deficit, that is, clouding of information processing about the consequence of one's actions due to extreme anger.

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### Apologies

- When a person apologizes before the other person who has been hurt, his/her appraisal of the apparent aggressor's behaviour is taken to be an unintentional one. Research has also shown that effect of apologies or excuses depend upon the extent to which these are honest (rather than concealing a malicious intent) and convey that the apparent aggressor's behaviour was out of his/her personal control.

### **Preattribution to unintentional causes**

- According to the concept of cognitive deficit, when a person is extremely angry, his/her capacity to process information regarding the consequences of his/her action gets reduced. In order to avoid that, one can, while visiting a potentially irritating person or setting, may pre-attribute one's anger to the other person's unique ways of communication rather than his malicious intentions.

### Preventing oneself from ruminating

- Similar to the effect of the preattribution to unintentional causes, preventing oneself from ruminating or thinking repeatedly about previous or imagined irritating behaviour of others may help avoid cognitive deficit. For example, reading articles about one's interest or watching pleasant or comedy films may check ruminations and help the person 'cool-off' to regain control over one's cognitive processes.

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### Other relevant techniques

- Following are some other effective techniques to reduce anger and aggressive behaviour :
  - Exposure to non-aggressive models (for example, having the photographs of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, etc.) may help regulate one's anger as these model provide alternative ways to respond to an irritating situation.
  - Developing social skills to get along with others is another important way to reduce anger. Often anger arises out of the irritation caused by a lack of social skill to convey one's wishes to others and by a resulting thought that others do not care for one's wishes. Learning to get along with other persons may help reduce anger in such situations.
  - Responses that are incompatible with anger such as humour, empathy etc. may help reduce aggressive behaviour.