

## Shrink Rap: March Madness

Max walks onto the court, feeling full of pride that he has made it this far in the competition. He is a bit boastful and arrogant. He has been talking about this all week, how his team will win “no problem.”

Onto the court walks the opposing team. Oh, there is their star player. As Max lays eyes on him there is a feeling of jealousy that rises in his throat. There is even a brief thought of self-doubt that turns into feelings of anxiety and worry that maybe this won't be as easy as he was setting it up to be.

Tip off. Dribble. Run. Pass. “Why didn't he take the shot? I set him up perfectly!” Internal self-talk gives feelings of disappointment in his teammate.

Max is playing hard, but missing shot after shot. He is feeling very frustrated. He goes for the foul. Down goes the opposing player who hits the court hard. “Was it just drama or did I really hurt him?” Max feels a twinge of guilt.

In the end the score was close. Max yells “close only counts in hand grenades,' but the explosion was much the same. Max has become Mad Max. Throwing things, cussing, arguing, blaming, pulling back fists . He quickly feels the humiliation of loss and swallowing of his pride.

Max's anger is a secondary emotion. He has experienced primary emotions – jealousy, self-doubt, anxiety, worry, disappointment, frustration, guilt, humiliation, exhaustion – that come prior to anger.. Mad Max needs some anger management.

First, stop and don't react. Take a deep breath.

Focus on calming self talk such as “calm down” “this too will pass” “it will be OK.”

It may help to do a countdown to calm, counting backwards from 100.

Take some time to cool down, away from others.

Listen to calming music. Do something fun. Read a book. Pray, meditate, or be in nature.

Share primary feelings by using “I feel . . .” statements with a friend or writing in a journal.

Find time to relax, and enjoy something special. Reward yourself when you handle your hot buttons in a positive way.

Chill out, Mad Max.

Linda Yearout, Licensed Clinical Marriage & Family Therapist