contrite. For this reason, apologizing for any mistakes we have made can prevent a potentially violent situation from getting out of hand.

A final unit teaches anger management. Here, individuals learn to recognize signs of their own anger and to practice techniques, such as deep breathing or distraction, that will calm them down. Simply counting to 10, thinking of a funny joke, or humming a pleasant tune can effectively reduce aggression, provided we initiate the behavior before our anger becomes too extreme (R. A. Baron, 1976).

Attributional retraining represents another important means of reducing aggression. At the beginning of this book, I asked you to imagine that you were riding on a bus when someone stepped on your toes. I noted that the anger you would feel would depend in large part on why you thought the person stepped on your toes. If you thought it was an unavoidable accident, you would be less angry than if you thought it was done purposefully (Weiner, 1986).

Attributional retraining programs seek to alter the attributions people make when they are provoked. As discussed earlier, aggressive people tend to assume hostile intent on the part of other people. For example, when someone cuts them off in traffic, they assume it was done on purpose rather than by mistake. This assumption of hostile intent feeds their anger and fuels their aggression. By altering the attributions they make for other people’s behavior, aggressive people can learn to be less aggressive.

This insight formed the heart of an intervention developed by Hudley and Graham (1993). Using a sample of children nominated by their elementary-school teachers as being highly aggressive, Hudley and Graham taught the children to refrain from assuming that other children intentionally were trying to harm them in situations of ambiguous causality. For example, if they were hit in the head by a ball, they were taught to first consider whether this might be an accident rather than a purposeful act of aggression. At the end of the 12-lesson course, the teachers rated the children’s aggressiveness, and this rating was compared to the ratings for children in a control group who never participated in the intervention.

Figure 13.11 shows the results of this intervention. As you can see, children who participated in the attributional retraining program became less aggressive over time, whereas those in the control condition did not.

**FIGURE 13.11**

Attributional Retraining and Anger Management

Students who learned to make benign attributions for potentially provoking situations became less aggressive than did students in a control condition.