

Anger

Anger is one of the emotions that always seems to have a bad reputation. People always see anger as negative; we tend to label angry people as destructive. When people come for counselling to manage their anger, they are usually quite full of shame and tend to put themselves down. If we just realised that anger is not wrong, and it just needs to be managed correctly.

If you find yourself with a secondary emotion like guilt or shame for being angry, you will find yourself in a dangerous position because it is my opinion that those secondary emotions are the ones that leave us with suppressed anger, that can explode at any moment. You may end up being a people pleaser or a doormat for people to walk all over.

Violence or abuse as a resulting from anger (or any type of emotion really) is not something that must be condoned and if you find yourself in this place, please seek help immediately. You may not realise this, but just talking and or venting to someone who understands will relieve the pressure immediately.

Firstly, let me start with the definition of anger.

Anger is the emotional condition that brings the body of a person into a state of readiness. The reaction that a person has to this emotion will either be a fight, flight or freeze response.

Where are you in this definition? for me, well I take flight 😊

FIGHT



FLIGHT oohlala!



FREEZE



The Urban Dictionary gives the definition as follows: A strong feeling of displeasure and/or hostility usually caused by someone or something that offends, threatens, or hurts you in some way. It can be good or bad depending on what you do with it and whether your grievance is real or imagined. Anger is an active and passive emotion. When "active" an angry person can "lash out" verbally or physically at an intended target whether justified or not. When "passive" anger is often demonstrated in silence, sulking, passive aggressive behavior, and tension.

Bitterness is like cancer. It eats upon the host

But anger is like fire. It burns it all clean.

The important thing to remember is that anger is a **normal emotion**. It is just the intensity of anger that differs from situation to situation and person to person depending on how they can manage their anger.

Anger is a **reaction** to what we may see as a threat to ourselves, someone close to us, to our community or to our family.

Anger is Physical, Behavioural and Cognitive

Anger has three components or reactions – anger can be **physical**, which means that you get a rush of adrenaline, and your heart starts to beat a whole lot faster, your muscles tighten, and you feel as though you either want to fight or flee. Anger can be found in our **thought processes**, in other words how we **think** about certain things that have been done to us or have happened to us. The way we think can make us angry. Lastly anger ties up with the way we **behave** or the way we express our anger. We may turn red in the face, we may storm away and slam the doors, we may shout, or we may just be quiet and glare at someone. But it is for certain that if we are angry the people around us will certainly know that we are angry just by looking at us.

It is important for everyone reading this to realise that everyone experiences anger, anger is healthy; it can motivate us to stand up for ourselves and to correct injustices. When we manage our anger well it can help us **in the right way** to manage certain triggering situations.

BUT!!! When we do not manage our anger well, or when we do not know what to do about our anger this can cause us to have problems at work, with our friends, at school and in our families. Anger can also have some severe consequences when we do not know how to deal with it in a constructive way.

What is the process of anger?

Firstly, anger begins when our **expectations are not met**, so in other words we may get angry when we expect people to do what we want them to, and they do not. The key here is to ask yourself if your expectations are realistic. Be honest with yourself.

Anger is a secondary emotion, in other words, it is the emotion we feel after our expectations are not met. Our primary (first) emotions before we feel anger may be disappointment, we may feel frustrated or we feel that we are not appreciated, we may even feel hurt or rejected, there are several primary emotions that we feel that all lead up to our feeling angry.

Anger makes us feel uncomfortable and sometimes we feel the need to justify why we feel angry and then our mind (thoughts) starts to run away with us.

Now we find ourselves looking for more to be angry about and we start to experience the physical reactions to our anger. The pressure starts to build, some people may sweat, some people go red, their hearts race etc.

Explosion!!!



Did you know that anger can be either destructive or it can be constructive? Unmanaged anger is going to hold us back most of the time. Anger can break your

heart. Research suggests that your heart or your cardiovascular system is much more susceptible to damage if your anger is not managed well.

When you are angry, you will have larger than normal increases in the flow of blood to your muscles (suggesting an exaggerated fight-or-flight response). You will also experience an increase in your levels of important stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, which can have negative effects on the cardiovascular system. When trying to control feelings of anger rather than channelling the anger healthily, often the hormones continue to surge around the body which can lead to all kinds of problems.

In the brain, the amygdala, the part of the brain that deals with emotion, is going crazy. It wants to do something, and the time between a trigger event and a response from the amygdala can be a quarter of a second. But at the same time, blood flow is increasing to the frontal lobe, specifically the part of the brain that is over the left eye. This area controls reasoning and is likely what is keeping you from hurling a vase across the room. These areas generally balance each other out quickly; according to some research, the neurological response to anger lasts less than two seconds.

THIS IS WHY YOU GET A LOT OF ADVICE ABOUT COUNTING TO 10 WHEN YOU ARE STARTING TO GET ANGRY

Anger is a way of people reaching out and saying, "meet my needs".

Our families and our culture teach us how to express our anger and we generally learn to follow the same pattern our family follows when expressing our anger.

Gender also plays a big part in the way we express our anger. It seems that society thinks that it is more acceptable for men to behave in an aggressive manner, whereas women are expected to behave more appropriately and in a reserved manner. Therefore women tend to suppress their anger more often than what men do.

Anger is situational and the level of a person's anger may depend entirely on the situation they find themselves in. It also depends on what kind of relationship you are having with the person who is making you angry. It depends on how we interpret the

situation we are in at the time; it depends on our previous experience as well to name a few situational examples.

Anger would also depend on our general mental health at the time; any type of diagnosed mental illnesses could very well make our anger a lot more intense.

What are the misconceptions when it comes to anger?

- Venting your anger will help you to get it all out and will make you feel better. This is not true, because displays of anger can make a situation a whole lot worse. Reacting to a situation physically or verbally could have harmful consequences, if you think about it, how is this type of behaviour going to make the situation any better?
- Ignoring anger will make it go away. No, it will not!! If you are feeling angry then you should acknowledge the way you feel and look for the best possible way to deal with how you are feeling.
- Anger is not controllable – yes, it is!! It is true however that there are certain situations that are beyond our control. But we do have a choice as to how we deal with these situations.
- People will respect you if you are angry – it is a way to get people to listen to you. No this is not true; being loud and bombastic puts people on edge and makes them feel uncomfortable it does nothing to help people see your point of view and it does even less in making people respect you more.
- Anger is only a problem when it is openly expressed. Expressing anger is not a problem if the appropriate response is given to the situation and anger is expressed in a healthy manner. It does become a problem when the response is exaggerated or even when the anger is not expressed at all.

When is anger harmful? When does anger cross the line? When is anger no longer a useful warning system to protect ourselves?

Anger is harmful when you get angrier than what the situation calls for, you find it difficult to cool off and hard to move on from the situation, you feel angry for most of the day and sometimes you don't know why you are angry and who you are angry

with. You have a short fuse and blow up for no reason and you find yourself being angry with people closest to you for the slightest little thing.

Anger is harmful when it is destructive, and it hurts others physically. Anger is harmful when it hurts others emotionally. Anger is harmful when it hurts us. Anger is not an acceptable excuse for hurting someone. A lot of the times we say things in anger that we do not mean and once those words have come out of our mouths it is very hard to erase them.

Anger is harmful when it leads to an aggressive expression. Direct aggression is when anger gets out of control, and it becomes physical or verbal. Passive aggression is also harmful because this anger is repressed, and it finds its expression in a subtle manner. Ill projected anger is wrongly taken out on innocent people. Your anger is projected onto others who have done nothing wrong.

Anger is not an acceptable excuse for hurting someone.

How can we help ourselves to manage our anger?

We need to develop our thinking processes when it comes to anger so that we can better understand our anger and where it comes from. We must find helpful ways of dealing with anger and therapy is a great tool. We must be able to correctly identify and verbalise our emotions. Working toward emotional maturity is the greatest gift you can give yourself. We must learn to control and regulate our impulses. We must learn how to deal with our frustration. We cannot get everything that we want (that is for my instant gratification buddies) I want it and I want it now..... this is never a realistic way of thinking. Sometimes we must just wait, sometimes we just do not get what we want at all. If as adults, some of our problems stem from not knowing how to express anger properly, we may try to avoid dealing with it altogether. We may try to put it off and hope it goes away (this is not a healthy way to manage anger) Never let yourself get too angry – deal with it when it occurs. Not everyone who is angry has automatically done wrong. Some anger is justified.

Anger is wrong when it leads us to lose control so that, instead of being helpful to others, we become abusive, saying evil or hateful things intended to hurt someone. Or we may simply not care about how we affect a person.

Anger can cause us to blow up

As mentioned before, people are encouraged to "vent" their anger. If husbands or wives become angry, they are supposed to say whatever they think, because it "gets it out of the system" or "releases tension." They tell us to allow even little children to throw tantrums, scream, and call parents nasty names.

Anger **can be controlled** and as mentioned before. Here is an example,

Moms, you have had a terrible day. The washing machine leaked on the floor, the kids have been fighting, supper has burnt, you broke your favourite coffee mug, the dog has just walked mud all over your clean floor. Your reaction? You explode in anger, shouting at the children and screaming for the dog to get out!

The next thing, the phone rings and it is your minister calling. Suddenly you are quite capable of carrying on a polite conversation. **So, you, see? Your temper can be controlled if you want it to be.**

What to do if anger is becoming a problem for you?

- Seek control and try to develop a plan
- Recognise that you do have issues with anger, you cannot fix what you do not acknowledge. Admit it!
- Make up your mind to change and seek professional help if you cannot manage this change yourself
- Think before you speak, slow down before you act
- Remember that every reaction or action has a consequence tied to it
- Work to solve the problem that angered you. This may seem obvious, but most angry people do the opposite. We may say we are trying to solve the problem, but really, we are trying to hurt the person who angered us. Instead of attacking the problem, we attack the person. First determine exactly what happened that angered you.

- The issue is not who angered you, but what happened to anger you. Learn to distinguish the act from the person. Hate the sin but love the sinner. Striking out to hurt the person will not solve the problem. Seek to destroy the bad conduct, while helping the person who committed it.

Also note that some problems are not worth being angry over. Learn to distinguish serious problems from imaginary or unimportant ones. If the problem is not worth working on, it is not worth being angry over. Forget it and go on. If it is important enough to make you justifiably angry, then use your anger to work on the problem.

Say what is necessary

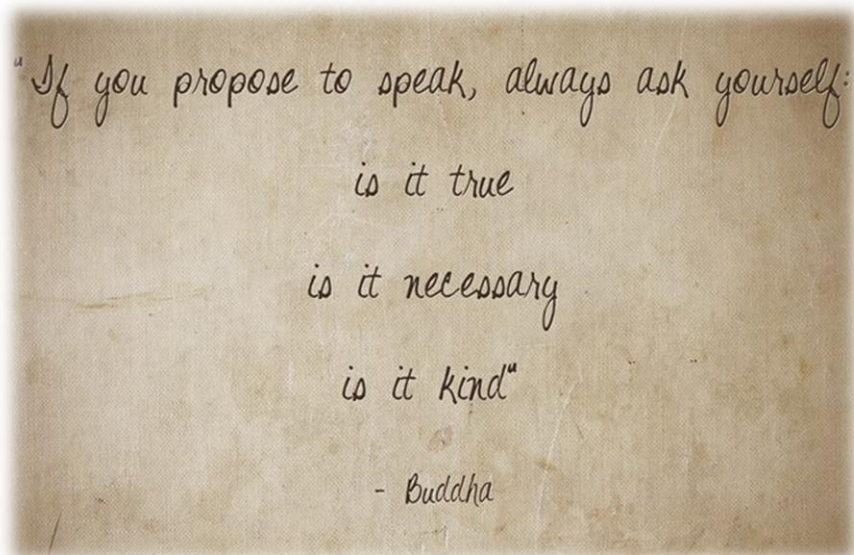
Say what is good and edifies and imparts grace to the hearers

Speak to help and not hurt

Be willing to listen to others

In speaking with others, we must consider the evidence that maybe we have been wrong as much or more than they have

Consider their evidence



And in conclusion: Apologize to those you have hurt. If discussion demonstrates that we have been wrong, we must say, "I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me."

