

Handling our Anger

Establish a proactive plan to keep anger from growing

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Stay away from angry people. Anger is contagious.

Proverbs 22:24 “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered.”

Stay under control at all times – fruit of the Spirit includes gentleness and self-control.

Proverbs 29:11 “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.”

1. Know what you are feeling.

We have learned to hide our feelings even from ourselves.

- We rationalize a course of inaction by telling ourselves, “What good is it going to do to talk about it? That’s not going to change anything.”
- We worry, worry, and worry, never facing what we really feel.
- We escape into new roles or hide behind old ones. (“Now wait just one minute, I’m the boss around here.”)
- We take the attitude that “these feelings will pass” and shrug them off as unimportant.
- We keep busy.
- We change one feeling for another – by acting angry when we are really hurt, for example we create a smoke screen diverting attention from our true feelings.
- We deny the feeling outright.
- We put our feelings on hold – compartmentalize them or put them in a back file.
- We dull or dilute our feelings with diversionary tactics (silence, indifference, tiredness, laughter) or with drugs or alcohol.
- We perform a “thinking bypass” – replacing our feelings with thought and logic, intellectualizing and rationalizing our way around the feelings.
- We tense our bodies, so that we do not feel anything.

- We let our women do our feeling for us – reinforce women for being emotional and showing their feelings so that we will not have to feel.
- We avoid situations and people who elicit certain feelings in us.
- We get sick or behave carelessly and hurt ourselves so that we have a reason to justify our feelings. (Ken Druck in The Secrets Men Keep p27-28)

Men are often communication “condensers” while their wives are often communication “amplifiers” thus often frustrating each other.

Our inability to understand ourselves and communicate accurately leaves us vulnerable to expressing only anger.

See “Feeling Words” from Bob Biehl

2. Know what frustrates you and plan your response.

Remember how anger develops?

1. I want something
2. I didn't get what I wanted and I am frustrated.
3. It is awful that I didn't get what I wanted. (we get angry not by what others do or don't do but by what we think.)
4. You shouldn't frustrate me. I must have my way. (The wish becomes a demand.)
5. You are bad for frustrating me. (I not only reject your behavior, I reject you, unless you change.)
6. Bad people ought to be punished and I will punish you.

Evaluate my expectations of myself, my spouse, my children, others.

- What is the expectation? (be precise)
- Why do I expect this? (What is the origin of this expectation?)
- What's the intensity of this expectation?
- Is the expectation realistic?
- How could I modify the expectation?
- How can I best respond to a frustration of this expectation? From O&W

3. Let loose of my “rights” by “Choosing humility.”

This, I believe, is the heart of the whole issue.

Most of my anger comes from unfulfilled expectations – my expectations are not met and so I get angry.

The issue is self-centeredness, pride!

Pride isn't just manifested in arrogance and boasting.

It is manifested internally in how we think about ourselves.

Do any of these apply to you? (See the worksheet)

- I tend to speculate why people are not as considerate as I think they should be.
- When someone is insensitive, it bothers me a great deal.
- Impatience or edginess overcomes me when people act incompetently.
- Sometimes I think about what life would be like if I had ideal circumstances.
- My moods tend to rise and fall, depending on how others show me respect.
- When I express my opinions, I am disgruntled if the other person does not receive them well.
- I am known for having a strong personality.
- When I witness something good in another person's life, my initial reaction is to wish the same thing for myself.
- In social settings I feel the need to keep an unblemished reputation, even if it requires a cover-up.
- I would prefer to avoid self-disclosure. (Carter & Minerth, 119)

If you checked five or more of these, pride has probably gained a foothold in your emotions and anger will likely follow.

You know how a young child demonstrates his self-centeredness.

How does it manifest itself in your life? (bed time for Paris and I want to read or watch a movie with Barbara OR I'm trying to get someplace on time and Barbara can't stand being early.)

My anger is most often expressed when my expectations are being met.

I have set myself up as king and everyone around me should do my bidding – at least they shouldn't get in the way.

Look at the way God describes the difference between a self-centered man and a man acting as Jesus acted:

Galatians 5:19-23 "The **acts of the sinful nature** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; **hatred**,

discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ **and envy**; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, **peace, patience, kindness**, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness and self-control**.

Nowhere is it written that others are **obligated** to meet my expectations, **in fact** the Scripture is quite clear that my obligation is to serve others.

Philippians 2:3-8 “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing” becoming a servant for us even to the point of dying for us.

If you chose to give up your “rights” and chose humility instead, what might it look like?

How would you treat your wife differently?

How would you treat your children differently?

How would you treat your co-workers or neighbors differently?

To overcome anger, I must let loose of my “rights” and choose humility – a decision to serve others rather than myself.

4. Tell yourself the truth.

Principles for life:

- Life is not fair.
- Most things do not lead to “the end of the world” as we know it.
- **Anger is a choice. No one can make you angry!**
- Anger will only make it worse.
- Blame is never justified (responsibility, yes but never blame). p87
- I CAN do something about my situation.

5. Take responsibility:

Avoid the temptation to rationalize your anger; assume full responsibility for how you respond.

I remember Daryl Woodward of the Denver anger management group telling me that a major issue for angry men is that they abdicate responsibility for making a change. They treat themselves as victims.

“What excuses do you hide behind to justify your ongoing unhealthy anger? (For example, my spouse never cooperates with me; my father never loved me, etc.) Most rationalizations are seductive because they contain an element of truth.”

(Carter/Minerth, 209)

- You are responsible for the outcome of all interactions.
- If your strategy to relieve stress doesn't work, don't blame.
- The question is not who is to blame but what can I do about it?
- You can't expect others to be different or act differently.
- You are never a victim. (McKay, et al, 77ff)

1. Know what I'm feeling
2. Know what is really frustrating me
3. Let loose of my rights
4. Tell myself the truth
5. Take responsibility