

All about ...

## Anger!

Its use, misuse and management.



Anger feels like power!

What are the consequences and purpose?

As we deal with stressful, traumatic or life-changing events, we experience powerful emotions. Some initially experience shock...or a feeling of emotional detachment in an effort to deal with emotions. Some experience unexpected bouts of tears at impromptu times when least expected.

One particularly difficult emotion connected to trauma is 'powerlessness'. This feeling may lead to aggression...the physical or verbal attack of innocent people. It may result in stereotyping, shunning particular ethnic, religious or socio-economic groups and be expressed in vandalism of property, churches, homes, or businesses.

The 'fight or flight' response, instinctively felt following a trauma, dumps adrenalin into our bodies. The flight aspect of this response makes us feel weak, agitated, helpless, and small. We much prefer the feelings of anger, which make us feel more powerful, more 'in control'. Our muscles are more rigid, our hearts beat faster, our eyes dilate, and our lungs expand.

Most people would prefer to experience aggressive rather than anxious thoughts. We then seek an outlet for this agitation or 'tension' we feel.

Anger is a heavy, distracting emotion, causing us to focus myopically (short-sighted focusing). It affects our hearts, health, minds, families, friends, and yes, even our nation. If left unaddressed, it boils over into domestic violence, abuse, road rage, impulsive reactions, medical difficulties and hostility.

We consider children, who bully or do not control anger (temper tantrums), as immature.

Adults who exert physical force or manipulate others are called abusive. We feel they, through their actions, are actually displaying their own unacknowledged feelings of low self-esteem. They are driven to 'display their power' over others in order to counteract their own feeling of worthlessness or in an effort to experience value within themselves.

To deal with anger, we must all 'take a deep breath' and accept the fact our bodies are giving us powerful signals. We must think through our feelings and anger (which is the secondary response to fear, loss, pain or frustration) and accept that we may actually be individually powerless. It may be difficult to admit we can't control everything in life, accept that we may not be able to retaliate or punish others who do not respect us, our values, faith or even our way of life. We can learn to express these feelings verbally, but first we must be honest with ourselves and willing to face and

address the loss, fear and frustration. To face a loss, we must accept the truth. We grieve, allow ourselves to feel anger, but also understand we can control, redirect and use our feelings constructively instead of reactively.

If someone steps on my foot, I may quickly turn around to fight, as an instinctive protective response. But what if I realize it's a best friend who stepped on my foot? Am I able to control that anger? Certainly. We all do it all the time.

Let's face life's obstacles and trials, being as wise as possible in preventing traumatic situations, or playing into the hands of those who would make us lose control. Redirect powerful feelings of anger into productive actions (helping a family in need, exercising, cleaning the garage!, volunteering at a local crisis shelter, organizing a fund raiser to help others).

When crises do come, as they will in life, remember anger isn't power, no matter how much it feels like it. And anger only goes so far before it destroys the carrier.

*This information is provided courtesy of  
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