



Christian Counseling
Equipping People for Life...

ANGER

Anger “per se” is not wrong. It is the way we use and express it that can be labeled right or wrong. Anger is a normal part of being human. Because anger is sometimes expressed inappropriately, it has been labeled as being negative. Many people assume it represents nothing good and see it as a sign of emotional instability or immaturity. But that is only part of the truth about anger.

Anger is an intent to preserve your personal growth, your essential needs, and your basic convictions.

Anyone who lives a life of anger is choosing to do so. As adults, we have the capability to decide whether we will keep or weed out certain traits learned in our formative years. When anger comes into people’s lives, it is usually because they have felt unappreciated, belittled, taken for granted, helpless, or in some way insignificant. When anger is expressed people are trying to express the conviction that they have some worth, and they want to be treated in a worthy manner. The angry person is trying to stand up for himself. He is trying to convince the world that he deserves to be treated with respect.

Sometimes it is hard to find this positive element in anger when the anger is coming from someone who seriously abuses this emotion.

MASTERING ANGER--

IGNORING IT:

The first step in mastering anger for yourself is learning to notice when we feel it. This sounds simple enough, but if you have spent years ignoring anger, you’re skilled at repressing these feelings so quickly that you simply don’t notice them at all.

Your goal is to notice angry feelings without judgment or self-criticism. This, too, is challenging because you may have believed for years that anger is bad and you are bad for feeling it.

A person choosing to suppress anger is aware of it but chooses to hold it in and not let people know he/she is angry. Suppressing anger does have merit especially if it helps you relax, cool down, and begin to act in a rational manner. Suppression may be healthy and wise, in some situations, but eventually the anger needs to be recognized and drained away in a healthy manner. Otherwise it may be expressed at the wrong time and in the wrong place. Suppressed anger can lead to depression, chronic fatigue or other illness.

HOW CAN COUNSELING HELP ME TO RECOGNIZE MY ANGRY FEELINGS?

There are many hidden ways that a person expresses anger. Counseling can help you identify those ways that you are using. Hidden anger can be expressed by being continually or always late, liking jokes that are cruel and hurt others, frequent sighing, frequent disturbing or frightening dreams. The list goes on and each individual may express hidden anger in a different way. Counselors are familiar with these and other manifestations of hidden anger and can help you explore the causes and distinct ways you deal with the anger in your life.

HANDLING IT:

A counselor will take you through the processes of recognizing, expressing, and releasing your anger. First you must learn to recognize your feelings of displeasure and then delay taking any action until you have thought through the situation and have control of what you say and do. If your emotions are too hot for you to handle, delay action, your emotions will probably be too hot for anyone on the receiving end to handle as well.

COMMUNICATING IT:

Remember that your intention is to learn to express your anger effectively. Expressing anger in ineffective and destructive ways is just as much a problem as not expressing your anger at all.

Healthy assertive communication is based on these two basic premises: a) Feelings (including anger, frustration, irritation, etc.) are neither good nor bad. They just are. Emotions are part of being human, and we are all entitled to have them. b) We have the right, as well as the responsibility, to express our feelings in ways that are considerate of others' feelings.

When verbally expressing your anger, statements need to be specific rather than general. Hearing someone tell you that you are "too dominating" will probably not be as useful as being told, "Yesterday at lunch, you interrupted me several times. I would like you to stop interrupting me, it makes me feel that you do not believe what I have to say is worth listening to and that makes me angry."

Take into account the needs of the person to whom you are giving feedback. Honestly sharing our reactions and feelings can be destructive if we fail to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end of our comments.

A counselor can help you learn to express your anger and role play with you to prepare you for standing up for yourself in a way that communicates your worth without putting the other person down.

Check to make sure what you said is, in fact, what they heard you say. One way of doing this is to ask the receiver to try to rephrase your feedback to see if it matches what you intended to communicate.

IF MY PARTNER HAS PROBLEMS WITH ANGER AND WON'T COME TO COUNSELING, SHOULD I COME ANYWAY?

Absolutely. There are valuable skills you can learn to help improve your relationship. A counselor can be a valuable resource to you when you are first learning to deal with your own anger or your partners. You need not go through the learning process alone.

You can have a life where you develop a sense of composure, recognize your own limitations and develop a sense of self worth without your partner's participation in counseling.

(Excerpted from *Good 'N' Angry* by Les Carter)