



Make Prevention a CHOICE

Anger: How To Express It

How Does Anger Feel?

Anger can be expressed with a loud voice and wild gestures. It can also be felt in less intense ways such as annoyance, resentment, withdrawal, self-pity, even envy. We sometimes fool ourselves into thinking we are angry only when we show it in loud, external ways. But we can be very angry and never say a word to anyone for very long periods of time. We must know how our anger feels before we can learn to make it work for us.

Anger Is A Choice.

We learn when to be angry. This may not make sense since we “get angry” so quickly in some situations. But the fact is we have learned since we were infants how to react to certain things. We learn from our parents, siblings, other family members, and friends what we “should” be angry about. In some cases our choice is good because we need to protect ourselves from the intrusion of other people. In other cases, our anger is over small things or things we cannot change. We must learn what “triggers” our anger and how to judge when our anger is justified.

How Do I Know When My Anger Is Justified?

The following points might help us check our feeling:

- ◆ Am I sure I fully understand the reasons behind what a person is saying or doing?
- ◆ Is there any chance I might be assuming too much about another person’s actions?
- ◆ Given the same place, time, and situation, would most other people be angry too?

When Does Anger Cause Us Trouble?

Ask yourself the following questions to determine if your way of expressing anger is helpful:

- ◆ Do I think often about past hurts or “keep score” in my mind on things people say or do that I believe are meant to hurt me?
- ◆ Does my way of communicating my anger allow for discussion with others or does it shut down communication?
- ◆ Do I find myself feeling more distant from others because of my anger?
- ◆ Does my way of communicating anger spark more anger in others?
- ◆ Do I suffer from physical problems, such as headaches, high blood pressure, muscle aches, or digestion problems?

If any of your answers for the preceding questions were “yes” you may need to learn some new ways of expressing your anger.

How Can I Express My Anger Effectively?

There are many ways to express our angry feelings. Listed below are some ways that do not work as well as ways that can work. Check your style in both lists.

Styles that don't work:

Open Aggression - explosive rage, intimidation, criticism, sarcasm, blame. This style shuts down communication, arouses anger in others, and ruins relationships by creating distance.

Suppression - avoiding any outward expressions of anger; making excuses for other's hurtful behavior when our angry feeling may be justified. This style can be hurtful to ourselves because we begin to lose touch with the things that are truly hurtful to us. We can begin to feel depressed and develop other physical symptoms mentioned earlier.

Passive Aggression - expressing anger indirectly by talking to others about the person you are truly angry with; choosing behavior such as slower work production, forgetting important events.

Styles that can work:

Assertive Anger - communicating angry feelings over legitimate needs in a constructive manner. This style requires use of good communication skills that avoid accusations or name calling. It requires that we know how we feel and what we need of others before we speak.

Dropping Anger - letting go of angry feelings when assertiveness has not worked and you have made every possible adjustment but problem behavior continues. This style requires that you know and accept some personal limits. It means realizing you cannot change or control everything around you.

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