

DYNAMICS OF ANGER
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All emotions are God given and created. God asks us to test, to discern and interpret them. We are to understand what our mind is telling us and to determine the accuracy.

I. What Does Research Have to Say?

- A. Anger seems to protect integrity and self value. It protects against a sense of helplessness and worthlessness.
- B. Anger acts as a defense against anxiety, fear and frustration.
- C. High self-disclosure followed by a personal threat is a powerful elicitor of anger, especially in marriage.
- D. Catharsis does not reduce the physiological arousal of anger, but it is reduced by physical motor activity
- E. There is a strong cultural factor in the expression of anger.
- F. Anger is most likely to occur when the choice of painful consequences is low (spousal abuse for example).
- G. People remember experiences of anxiety and anger best.
- H. Expressions of anger are the result of personal choice.
- I. Excessive dependencies cause anger.
- J. Craving control creates anger, and control need is caused by:
 - 1. performance takes priority over relationships
 - 2. differentness is threatening
 - 3. obligation is taught as mandatory and not a choice
- K. Anger is role modeled by our family of origin, educational systems, television, movies, etc. and then becomes part of our habitual behavior.
- L. Anger generates a feeling of independence and a desire to be responsible to no one.
- M. Anger feels like it gets rid of stress and solves problems.
- N. Anger can produce rigidity, a critical attitude, labeling, scapegoating, resentment, irritability, malice, bitterness, coldness, lack of intimacy, an violence.

II. What are the Characteristics of Anger?

- A. Anger is a vital God given emotion, like other emotions. We are made in His image, and anger is, therefore not right or wrong. It is how it is released and expressed that matters.
- B. If love/emotional intimacy is the goal, anger becomes constructive, creative, empathetic, and searching. There is a desire to understand why I'm angry, what motivates my thoughts and the other person's thoughts.
- C. Anger diversion behavior includes crying, exercising, work activity, humor, writing, verbalizing pain, problem solving, listening to music, sports, etc
- D. Thoughts that stimulate anger include the fallacies of entitlement, expectation, fairness, global labeling, goal accomplishment, a stress free life, assumed intent, and life will never change.
- E. A universal function of anger includes social regulation. It defines social behavior, protects societal values and moral structures, and creates social bonds (us versus them) and changes cultures (wars).
- F. Counselors helps people deal with anger by learning certain techniques such as: time-out, reframing, re-channeling, intervention/change techniques and how to avoid assuming my past thoughts, experiences, and feelings are the same as yours, mind reading, ambiguous messages, and failure at negotiation.
- G. Hate is the opposite of love, and anger is the opposite of apathy. Anger then can help us increase our relational intimacy! Healthy anger lets others know how we feel and allows honesty. Emotions are the way we become aware of differences and let us know something is bothering me about what you said.
- H. Anger can be a warning that a personal boundary has been violated and gives us the power to say no when needed. Boundaries are necessary for knowing where I begin and you begin.
- I. The cost of not communicating emotions clearly is loneliness, isolation, and shallowness of life.

III. Why Do We Stay Angry? (James 4:1-3)

- A. Anger as an emotion is God given. There are over 500 references to anger in the Bible, and more than half of those references deal with God's anger!
- B. Anger is a secondary response to any kind of pain such as fear, hurt, frustration, shame, stress and reduced self-esteem. Life is hard and unfair.
- C. Anger involves power and passion. It makes us feel in control (I can do something) and gives the illusion of safety. It is easier to feel anger than to feel pain.
- D. People love the power and control of anger. It is felt as a high, a "rush." Anger feels useful if a person has poor communication skills and prefers to avoid others.

- E. Angry people come from angry families. Angry families solve problems with anger, listen only when people are angry, and it is considered normal and even expected. It then becomes a habitual life style.
- F. Anger makes life more exciting. You can sustain an adversarial relationship, gain pleasure from resentments and make the enemy more miserable, and best of all, you can blame others for your responsibilities. Anger is therefore self-protective, deflecting and distancing.
- G. Anger enables you to maintain rigid beliefs about the world, about yourself, about people close to you. You can then believe you know what is right and wrong, know what is best for other people, perceive that your values are correct, have power to enforce those beliefs, and avoid really getting to know others (narcissism/egocentrism).

IV. How Should we then Express Anger? (Amos 1:11, Colossians 3:8)

- A. Learn that anger (all emotions) has a circular pattern and that discernment is necessary in each step of the process.
 - 1. an event leads to
 - 2. a thought leads to
 - 3. a physiological chemical reaction leads to
 - 4. a feeling leads to
 - 5. a behavior leads to
 - 6. a reaction from others leads again to
 - 7. an event in our life
- B. Be accountable to someone.
- C. Our mentor/disciple/fellowship group/pastor/friend, etc helps us identify cues to our emotional pattern. What stimulates anger? How do we express it? And most important of all, why do we perceive what we do about anger? (from our philosophical/theological core beliefs).
- D. Use anger as a signal that there are problems we need to address.
- E. Take action when necessary, but only after thinking through the situation.
- F. Express anger without losing control.
- G. Maintain the goal of solving problems, not just express feelings.
- H. State anger clearly in ways that others can understand so that others can respond appropriately to their wants and needs.
- I. Anger is an emotion that God can use to get our attention. We can then become more aware of how to mature, to learn, and to make positive changes. All emotions can be a force for good or evil.
- J. Let go of anger once the problem is over, and this, of course is called *forgiveness*.

Anger in Marriage and Work Relationships

What are Some Common Conflicts in Marriage and Work Relationships that Provoke Anger?

Marriage

- A. Finances
- B. Sexuality
- C. Children
- D. Inlaws/relatives (family of origin)
- E. Recreation
- F. Religion
- G. Culture
- H. Criticism
- I. Disdain
- J. Defensiveness
- K. Stonewalling

Work

- A. No power for input
- B. Not valued for what I do
- C. Feeling violated
- D. Overwhelmed
- E. Unfairness
- F. Doom theme
- G. Discrimination

Other Words for Anger:

Mad, corked (slang words), scorn, insult, begrudge, disdain, annoy, offend, bitter, fed up, repulse, irritated, infuriated, incensed, sarcastic, up tight, cross, frustrated, indignant, furious, rage, exasperated, blame, defensive, stubborn, gossip, complain, half-hearted, lazy, forgetful, silence, intimidating, critical, provoking, smoldering, anguished, overwhelmed (pressed in spirit), avoidant, sneaky, too moral, shaming, hateful, stonewalling, invalidate, sabotage.

Scripture Application:

Genesis 4:6
Deuteronomy 4:21-25
1 Samuel 11:6
2 Kings 22:13
Psalms 4:4, 37:8
Proverbs 14:29, 15:18, 16:32
Matthew 5:21,22
Mathew 23
Mark 3:5
Romans 9:22
Colossians 3:8
James 1:19