

Anger

Anger is an emotion. The physical effects of anger include increased heart rate, blood pressure,

ANGER IS AN EMOTION THAT CENTERS ON GETTING CONTROL

Someone calls you an "inconsiderate idiot," and you feel angry. Someone cuts in front of you on the freeway, and you feel angry. Someone attacks your friend, and you feel angry. Someone tells you that you will not get the pay increase you think you deserve, and you feel angry. What causes you to feel anger? What do all of these situations have in common?

Underlying anger is caused by a perceived *loss of control* over factors affecting important values. The values in the above examples might be pride, getting someplace on time, someone you love, money, or being treated "fairly"--we are *frustrated* about not getting what we want or expect.

With anger, we usually think we know what *caused* the problem. We have some target(s) for our anger. It may be the person criticizing you, the person who cut you off on the freeway, an attacker, your boss, or even yourself. With anger, we may hope that a burst of energy aimed at the threat will defeat it. Or we may hope that a burst of energy will break the barrier stopping us from meeting our goal.

Anger can be used constructively at times. It can give us energy we need to fight back if physically attacked. However, for most situations it merely clouds our judgement and creates extra stress. If anger prompts aggressive behavior toward other people, it can permanently harm relationships--especially with those we love. Prolonged or frequent resentment (mild anger) has been shown to be a significant cause of cardiovascular problems and heart attacks. It is the villain behind "type A" behavior.

Overcome Anger and Aggression

GET CONTROL OF ANGER-PRODUCING BELIEFS AND THOUGHTS

Anger is caused by your inability to mentally cope with some situation. If you have a persistent problem with anger, then you either have important *underlying issues* that you have not yet resolved, or you are using *emotional coping methods* that are ineffective.

There are many internal and external methods for coping with anger. Many methods that help with *any* negative emotion also help with anger. Perceived *loss of control* for getting *important values* met causes anger. To get over your anger, it is helpful to *identify* those important values and to understand why you may lack confidence in your own ability to be happy.

Blaming others (or yourself) and remaining angry may appear the easy way out. Finding new ways to think about the situation and make yourself happy requires skillful effort. If you want to reduce your anger, consider each of the following issues or techniques for regaining mental control.

1. EXPLORE EMOTIONS OF HURT AND FEAR UNDERLYING THE ANGER

Remember that anger stems from fear and a sense of helplessness. Some important value or goal is threatened and you feel that you are losing control of the situation. You may not want to admit feeling hurt or fear. (You may think such an admission is a sign of weakness.) Yet these are the underlying feelings that will help you identify *which values and goals are being threatened*.

The real threat may not be the *surface issue* (being late to the movie) as much as the *underlying issue* (not being important to someone you love or being mistreated). Identifying emotions of *fear* and *hurt* will open the door to these underlying issues. Once you get in touch with the fear and hurt, what images, thoughts, and underlying issues are associated with [cause] them? (Self-exploration; chapter 2.)

2. DEVELOP EMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING

My sexually abused client found that developing a *deeper, empathetic understanding* of her father and developing an *unconditional caring* for him as a person were keys to defusing her anger.

If you choose to decrease your anger at someone, the first step is to make every effort to see the situation *from their point-of-view*. You might begin by asking them to explain their point of view. Encourage them to talk about underlying assumptions, beliefs, or background factors that may have led them to the point- of-view or behavior you are upset about. Summarize what they say and their *emotions* from their point of view (so that they agree you understand their point of view). Understanding their situation, point of view, and the causes of their beliefs and behavior is usually the major hurdle to get control of anger.

Forgiving is not forgetting, it is remembering and letting go.

(Claudia Black, 1989)

If it is impossible to have that kind of conversation with someone, then try to imagine an understanding scenario that allows you to defuse your anger. From my experience of dealing with people with similar situations, I try to imagine what they might have been thinking and why.

If you do not know the person well enough to know what their motives were, then what can you do? Recall the client who was so filled with anger after being raped by a masked man she would never see again. We looked at what we knew about human nature in general. Can you accept human nature as it really is? Can you accept that there are gang killings, child abuse, theft of my belongings, inconsiderate behavior, or other damaging events--without getting too upset about them? Can you accept that some people will take advantage of me and "get away with it"? To be able to control our anger despite tragic events, we must each find a way to deal with the "dark side" of life. Issues of injustice, unfairness, and entitlements are discussed below (Chapters 4, 8).

3. ASSUME THE BEST INTENTIONS (whenever possible)

To the degree that Mike believed his wife's underlying motives for being late were aimed at harming him, then his anger increases. If he dwells on thoughts like, "She doesn't care about me," "She's inconsiderate," "I wouldn't do that to her," or "She's so selfish," then they will add fuel to his anger.

Instead, he can interpret her *underlying intentions* as a legitimate need to take care of herself. He can *focus more on evidence from the present and past that she loves him* and is not trying to hurt him. How he chooses to think will increase or decrease his anger. Try to assume the best intentions from people until you have repeated indications that they seem to have other motives.

As a psychologist who has seen hundreds of clients, I have discovered that even the most hostile people are usually *not trying to hurt others*. Instead, they primarily want *to protect or defend themselves* and to meet their own values. (The most hostile people are often people who have experienced a lot of abuse and criticism and are very sensitive to it.) That insight helps dissipate much of my anger.

That insight does *not* necessarily mean that I will refrain from using consequences to discourage hostile behavior. But it does mean that I can deal with the person much more calmly and effectively.

How does the insight that people are usually aggressive to defend themselves apply to less hostile people? If a person who normally cares about you is angry or purposely harms you, then he (or she) is probably doing it out of defensiveness or *fairness!* He probably thinks that you did something to him first, and he is just defending himself, "getting even," or trying to "teach you a lesson" so you won't harm him again. In short he is probably operating under the same reasons that *you* are when *you* perpetuate the cycle of conflict! He is *assuming the worst intentions of you*--that you don't care about him or that you tried to

intentionally hurt him.

4. IS "FAIRNESS" OR "JUSTICE" AN UNDERLYING ISSUE?

So often our expectations are the keys to our feelings. We may not accept that others are imperfect or that we are imperfect. "Bad," "evil," "unfair" things happen billions of times daily. It is natural to feel negative emotions such as anger in response to events we label "bad" or "unfair."

"Fairness" versus "Happiness" doctrines. The fairness doctrine states that "Life should always be fair and exactly equal for everyone." If we have developed too many expectations based upon this "fairness doctrine," then we are doomed to a life filled with misery. In the worst cases people spend much of their life calculating fairness, balancing what they have received versus what they have given, and maintaining some sort of self-created accounting system that is based entirely on ideas of fairness. This fairness belief system may have little correspondence to outside reality.

What is "fair" about some people being born into happy, prosperous families and living prosperous, long, happy lives while other people are born into miserable situations and die young after leading a life filled with suffering? "Unfairness" is all around us. I recommend abandoning the "fairness doctrine."

It can be replaced with the happiness doctrine. It states that *I will choose that which contributes most to my and others' happiness.* I accept that my life and all my options are a gift. If I compare my gifts to others'--especially to those that have more--I will only reduce my appreciation of my own gifts.

There really is some "justice" in this world. What I have been saying about "fairness" is that rigidly holding on to a fairness doctrine can undermine our happiness. However, one concern people express to me is that if they do not hold on to this doctrine, then there will be no justice or consequences.

I ask those people to remember that we live in *a world controlled by natural laws which we cannot "break."* Natural laws *do* provide some measure of natural consequences--of rewards and punishments for our actions. Society can also create laws which provide additional rewards and punishments. Frequently the guilty seem to go unpunished. How do we control our anger when we see such miscarriages of justice?

"Psychological Justice." Psychological laws are particularly effective as natural punishments. People who take advantage of other people are punished by natural reactions--such as lack of real intimacy and love in their life. They are punished by their Higher Self, which sees "the evil" or harm they do to others and produces guilt through natural empathy with others. They are punished by their own anger and negative beliefs--which torment

them with conflict, anger, and anxiety. They are too busy feeling anger to feel happy.

For example, Stalin and Hitler are two men who may share the distinction of causing more harm to more people than any other men in history. Some have said that these men were examples of how *evil power can pay*--as if to prove that there is no justice. However, while both men achieved great worldly wealth and power, both men *lived highly tormented lives*. Understanding how difficult it is for harmful people to be happy people helps me *let go of some of my anger* when something appears "unjust."

Accept reality and forgive. Some of our anger may stem from a belief that others have unfairly received more than we have. We might resent people who have more money, beauty, success, or happiness--especially if we don't think they "deserve" it. We might feel that life has given us a "bum deal" if we follow the "fairness doctrine." How do we get over anger at someone who got something they did not "deserve"? The fairness doctrine says that people should get only what they deserve.

The happiness doctrine says that in order to be happy we must accept that things do not always appear to be fair. I will hope that both the other person and I can learn to be happy with what we have each received--even though it may not be "equal" or "fair." Who knows what the ultimate affects of their "advantages" may be? Many poor people are happier than many rich people. Which doctrine will help you get most control of your anger and feel happiest?

We have seen how my sexually-abused client was able to get rid of her deep anger through understanding and forgiveness. Understanding and forgiveness are necessary ingredients to any anger-reduction formula.

We may also have trouble forgiving ourselves. We might be angry at ourselves because we are still living with the consequences of bad choices we made earlier in our lives. We may think we are so "bad" or "stupid" that we don't deserve to be happy. How can we forgive ourselves for messing up our lives? We may blame our parents or even "God" for making us the kind of people that "failed." It may all seem so "unfair." How do we get over blaming ourselves or others for our misfortunes?

The fairness doctrine says that we should only receive that which we "deserve." The "fairness doctrine" says that someone who has more than they "deserve" should have the extra taken away, while those who have less than they deserve should receive more. This doctrine says we should only be happy when the accounts are all balanced. Until then, we should be spending our lives balancing the scales--and that will never happen.

The happiness doctrine says: 1--forget about fairness accounting; 2--accept life as it is now; 3--love ourselves and others unconditionally--make our own (and others') happiness the top goal; and 4--act accordingly. Blaming ourselves or others, guilt, worry, accounting, resentful feelings, and other unproductive negative thoughts are just barriers to our being happy.

[Note: Accepting the happiness doctrine does not imply that we will not be assertive about enforcing contracts or other agreements that have been made with others. We can build rewards and punishments into contracts and take actions that reward and punish others to "motivate" them if necessary. That is not the same as enforcing a contract out of "fairness" or "to get even."]

5. ARE YOU "HOLDING ON" TO THE ANGER (OR HURT) FOR MOTIVATION?

Do you "hold on to your anger" or feelings of being hurt in order to *punish the person*. Do you want to punish the person to "get even" (operating out of a "fairness doctrine")? Perhaps you can begin to see how the "fairness doctrine" does not work well. You may think that you should punish them by holding on to your anger. Holding on to anger or hurt can only hurt you!

If your goal is *to change someone's behavior*, you may use rewards and punishments to affect behavior. However, you don't administer the consequences out of a sense of revenge or anger. Do it caringly--as a way of helping them learn. Wait until you are calm. Stating your reasons calmly is much more effective than punishment given out of anger! (In most situations, rewards are more effective than punishments.)

6. EXAMINE UNDERLYING EXPECTATIONS

Unfulfilled expectations can lead to anger. What are your expectations of yourself and others for this situation? Are you expecting more than is realistic *for this person in this particular situation*?

Examine your underlying expectations about what you need to be happy and live the type of life you want. Examine your expectations from others. Perhaps you have higher (or different) standards than others. Perhaps you expect others to follow them as well as yourself. You may even be right. But these are *your expectations of others*--not theirs. They are who they are, and one root of anger is *not accepting people (or events) as they are*.

"Entitlement thinking" and high expectations about what we should receive cause a feeling of being "in a hole." They cause some people to see themselves as victims and view the world negatively. These expectations are the cause of a deep sense of powerlessness and prolonged resentment about being treated "unfairly." They are the deepest source of many people's anger. (Chapter 4)

7. CHOOSE HAPPINESS INSTEAD OF ANGER--"My anger hurts me more than it hurts you"

Holding on to anger has other self-destructive consequences. These consequences include negative effects on your body and taking away from your enjoyment of the present moment. You cannot feel angry and happy at the same time--it's impossible! Therefore, you have a choice--anger *or* happiness!

People who habitually choose anger over happiness lead frustrated, angry lives--not happy ones. Remind yourself of these consequences to get more control of your anger. Say to yourself, "Self, why choose anger when I can choose to think thoughts that produce happiness?" Use these 8 methods to control anger. Also, refer to other powerful techniques from the book--especially the six harmonious functioning mental control strategies from chapter 8 (CHUG-OF: Choice, Harmony, Understanding, Goals & expectations, Optimism, and Focus).

8. Remember, "IT'S THE WAY OF THINGS"

My wife Sherry and I have developed a simple formula for overcoming anger which we often use when we face something unchangeable. It comes from Winnie the Pooh Bear's philosophy of life (Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh*). When something goes wrong that is out of his control, Pooh Bear says simply, "It's the way of things." We cannot change the world and the forces which operate it, and we can't even change many things about ourselves or other aspects of our life--especially our past. So just remember--even though we can never understand it all--the most basic understanding of all is--"It's the way of things."

ACTION METHODS FOR REDUCING ANGER

**WARNING: AGGRESSIVE EXPRESSIONS OF ANGER CAN CAUSE
PERMANENT DAMAGE TO RELATIONSHIPS**

1. THINK--"AGGRESSION WILL DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN US"

Think about someone who severely attacked you physically or verbally. What was that experience like? The fear, hurt, and anger of that memory can stay with you the rest of your life. The aggression may create some small measure of *lasting resentment and distance* between you and the person who delivered the attack. The aggression can cause lowered trust and a *lasting fear* that they may hurt you again.

The same lesson can be applied when you hurt someone else--whether you mean it or not. *You may be "conditioning" your partner to fear or resent you instead of loving you!* Fear and resentment are incompatible with love.

Is this kind of *permanent damage* what you really want when you are verbally or physically aggressive toward someone you care about? You can hurt and alienate your partner with even mild "name-calling" or negative "labeling." (It will also probably escalate the conflict.) The effect can be greatly exaggerated with someone who is sensitive to criticism or anger.

Visualize a big STOP SIGN! Think about the consequences before you attack someone or speak out of anger. Instead, try empathy; assume their best intentions; and be calm and diplomatic.

2. BE ASSERTIVE--Seek "Win-Win" Solutions

If you are angry at someone, focus on your top goal in life--to maximize happiness for yourself and others. *Choosing* love and happiness--even when you feel angry--strengthens your Higher Self.

Focus on loving yourself. Reach deep inside and find the part of you (your Higher Self) that loves this other person unconditionally (*i.e.* no matter what they have done). Focus on those feelings of love and on the goal of seeking a "win-win" solution. Try to understand their point of view as well as your own. If you are successful in producing a "win-win" solution, you will have a "triple win:" 1--getting your own original needs met, 2-eliminating your own self-destructive anger toward the other, plus possibly 3-getting the other person to feel closer to you ("winning them over"). The best way to eliminate an enemy is to make him or her your friend!

3. TAKE A "TIME-OUT" IF SOMEONE GETS TOO UPSET

Observe your own emotions when you are in a frustrating situation. If you see that you are starting to feel too angry, anxious, or guilty, then take a "time-out." A time-out means that you both stop talking or that you separate long enough to think about it, calm down, and get your control back. Time-

outs can be effective even if they are only one to five minutes long. Use your time out to clarify what you want or how you want to deal with the other person.

To take a time-out, you might say, "I need some time to think about what we have been talking about. I would like to continue our conversation [in a few minutes, at a later time, etc.]." If the other person doesn't want you to leave, insist and leave anyway.

Similarly, if you observe that the other person is getting too upset and is not dealing constructively with the situation, take a time-out. You could say the same thing as before, or say, "It looks like we're both getting upset, and if we can't discuss this more calmly, then I will need to take a time-out."

Take the time-out in the *early stages* of a conflict, don't wait until it has gotten destructive. Take time-outs as often as is necessary to keep things reasonably calm and productive. (See Chapter 6.)

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4. FIND CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS TO RELEASE YOUR HIGH ENERGY AND AROUSAL

You have heard the expression, "Get your anger out" to get rid of it. Freud used the analogy of a steampot that will burst if the energy is not released. To some degree the analogy is accurate.

Anger causes high levels of arousal and energy--energetic activity releases it. Research has supported the idea that anger leads to a high arousal, high energy state that can last for hours--or even longer. During that time, we are more prone to renewed anger. Energetic activities use the energy and help dissipate that extra arousal. Therefore, in addition to internal methods of reducing anger, it is important to dissipate anger by energetic actions. Try exercise, walking, running, sports, physical labor, or other energetic activities--especially those that make you feel good.

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5. CHOOSE CONSTRUCTIVE (NOT SELF-DESTRUCTIVE) EXPRESSIONS OF ANGER

Many people take Freud's analogy farther. They believe that in order to get rid of their anger, they must "Get their *aggression* out" by doing something destructive or harmful to some other person or some thing. Many people--even some therapists--mistakenly believe that aggressive or confrontive expressions of anger are the only way that we can "get our anger out." We have to "take it out" on someone or some thing. Research has shown that this belief is not true.⁽¹⁾

It is true that any energetic behavior reduces anger by dissipating the arousal. It is also true that the resulting "good feeling" reinforces the destructive behavior. However, reinforcing aggressive behavior means that it will become a *stronger habit*. People using aggressive behavior to "get rid of their anger" tend to become more--not less--aggressive. Research evidence supports this conclusion. A better way to reduce anger is *to do something constructive and energetic* such as exercise, sports, or doing something physically active that helps solve the problem.

What about "honest" aggressive behavior? How would you feel if someone called you "stupid," "selfish," or a string of other negatives and then said, "I just wanted to be honest about how I feel?" How would you feel? How constructive was it to the relationship?

The aggressive statement may have been honest in the sense that it reported their thoughts at *an angry moment*. However, was it the whole picture? Or was their "honesty" just a series of anger-induced thoughts that were intended to hurt you in order to get even for some perceived harm?

Wouldn't it be more constructive if the person told you that he or she really cares about you, but is angry over something you did? Wouldn't it be more constructive if the person took time to listen to your point-of-view and work on constructive solutions to the problem? Which approach is better? Aggressive "honesty" or a thoughtful, assertive honesty?

PRACTICE 1: (1) List your self-destructive expressions of anger and replace them with constructive expressions. List ways you deal with frustrating situations. What thoughts increase your anger? Which words or actions are harmful to others, your relationships, or yourself? (Examples: Yelling, swearing, attacking, throwing things, eating, smoking, drugs, avoiding the problem, or taking it out on someone else.) What thoughts and actions would be more constructive?

(2) List energetic activities to reduce anger's arousal. Sports, exercise, biking, walking, running, doing chores, laughing, and even (constructive) talking can help reduce anger's arousal. The more vigorous the activity, the more effective.

PRACTICE 2: Develop a plan for assertive (not aggressive or passive) conflict resolution. Follow the suggestions above (and in chapter 6) to develop a plan of how to deal assertively with situations where you tend to be angry and aggressive (or non-assertive). Seek win-win solutions.

SUMMARY:

To overcome anger and aggression,
choose **EMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING**

over assuming the worst intentions,
choose **UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE CARING**
over insensitivity,
choose the **HAPPINESS DOCTRINE**
over the fairness doctrine,
choose **ACCEPTING** the unchangeable aspects of reality
over hostility--"its the way of things,"
take **CONSTRUCTIVE ENERGETIC ACTIONS**
to help get rid of the steam inside, and
remember, there is inherent justice for harmful behaviors and
most of all, remember,
EVERY MOMENT OF ANGER IS ONE LESS MOMENT OF HAPPINESS.

Anger is a message.

Anger tells you that you are hurt and you don't want to be hurt.



Anger is a valid, healthy emotion.

Anger is an emotion that can help set limits and boundaries in relationships.

Anger is a tool to help identify needs and wants.

Anger is powerful and needs to be used with respect.

When you know how to respond to your anger positively, you can tap into an unlimited source of personal power. This personal power can in turn enable you to speak for yourself and to learn to manage the fear of shame or criticism.

Anger Alternatives can show you how to work towards your wants without rage, violence, aggression, or controlling behaviors.

Did you know that...?

- An anger problem is any behavior caused by anger that hurts you or someone else
- Anger problems affect men and women of all ages, and from all walks of life.
- Anger problems come in many forms.
- Some people become indecisive or inactive when they feel their own or another persons anger. (Passive)

- Some people act out anger feelings by attacking, or trying to control. (Aggressive)
- Some people use addictions to avoid their feelings. (Dependant-Addicted)
- Some people become introverted and depressed.(Depressive)
- Some people use their anger to manipulate or manage others. (Passive-Aggressive)
- All anger problems are a form of control.
- When anger is "reacted" to, the anger is in control.

At Anger Alternatives, you can learn the tools to...

- Control anger related behavior
- Separate anger feelings from anger behaviors
- Identify anger sources
- Learn anger signals
- Stop anger from being in control.
- Accept and respect yourself
- Develop emotional literacy
- Release old shame and guilt.
- Break old patterns that don't work
- Stop reactionary behaviors
- Take appropriate risks
- Determine available support
- Improve interpersonal communication skills.
- Improve relationships with family, friends, and fellow employees.
- Re-establish credibility
- Establish limits and boundaries Establish limits and boundaries
- Take appropriate risks
- Release old shame and guilt.
- Break the "old patterns" that don't work
- Enable yourself
- About anger and anger problem
- Anger is a strong feeling of displeasure and belligerence aroused by a wrong; wrath; ire.
- Anger is a feeling that tells me that I am hurt and I don't want to be hurt.
- Anger is about what I don't want. When I learn not to react to anger and look at it as a mirror, it identifies what I do want.
- The "Gift of Anger" is to be able to go after what I want instead of fighting with what I don't want.
- An anger problem is any anger-related behavior (verbal, physical, or emotional) that is hurtful to me or someone else.

Anger knows no gender

- Both men and women have anger problems.

- **Anger is a real feeling that tells you that you are hurt. If you don't know how to recognize when you are hurt, your energy grows unaware. If you get to a point where you act instead of think, you have mismanaged your anger.**
- **When you have an anger problem, getting stuck in your anger can lead you to blame and punish others for your pain. Once you have reacted to anger, you have allowed your feelings to control you. This could lead you to behaviors you never would have done if you were making rational choices.**
- **You have no right to put your attitude on anyone. You probably know that, and you probably feel pretty bad about what you may have said or done.**
- **The problem is not that you are wrong**
- **The problem is not that you were angry**
- **The problem is that you were out of control**

Feeling Safe

- **People feel safe around those they respect and trust. It is not safe to be around somebody who breaks the rules of respect and takes his or her emotions out on others.**
- **Anger that is aggressive, passive, depressive, or manipulative is likely to be destructive and hurtful**
- **Anger problems usually keep getting worse until they are addressed, responsibility is taken, and the behavior is changed**

Managing Anger

- **Anger is a healthy feeling**
- **Anger serves a constructive purpose and has a healthy message**
- **Anger can tell you what you don't want**
- **Anger can tell you when, how and in what ways you are hurt**
- **Anger can tell you how deep that hurt is**
- **Anger can tell you how to heal that hurt**
- **Knowing how to manage anger can help you know how to set limits and determine boundaries in your relationships.**
- **Knowing when you are angry can teach you what you need.**
- **Knowing what you are angry about can teach you what you want**

You may have an anger problem if:

- **You were disrespected as a child**
- **You show disrespect for others or yourself**
- **You act on feelings without thinking**
- **You blame others for how you feel**

- You do not know how to tell somebody when you are hurt
- You use addictive behaviors (alcohol, drugs, sex, work, etc.) to avoid feeling
- You are likely coping the best you know how with the skills you have learned.

We all do the best we can with the tools we have learned.

- That does not make you wrong.
- It does not make the people who taught you wrong
- It does mean you are responsible to learn to stop the behavior
- It does mean you have to learn how to stop reacting if you want to stabilize your life and be a healthy part of the lives of those around you
- You are not the problem
- How you are behaving is the problem.
- You can change.
- You can break the anger pattern.
- By using RT© and PAF©, Anger Alternatives teaches you tools:
 - To control reactions
 - To separate the anger from the behavior
 - To recognize hurts
 - To recognize needs and wants
 - To speak for yourself
 - To establish limits and boundaries.
 - To recognize other options
 - To make healthy choices
 - To achieve balance in your life
 - To establish and maintain respect-based relationships
- It is not reasonable to lose control and hurt somebody you love with words or actions.
- Those behaviors hurt others' emotional well-being. Those behaviors violate others' trust.
- If other people around you are also reactive, everybody's lives are harmed. If there are children, you are teaching them the same anger behavior.
- *Anger Alternatives teaches the tools to heal the wounds we carry and stop the wounds we create.*
- Forms of Anger Attitude
- Feelings and experiences develop attitudes.
- Anger is expressed in attitude.
- Anger feelings occur when something you don't want is happening or

- something you want isn't happening.
- How you "feel", is about you and never about anything anybody is "making" you feel.
- The feelings you are having are you, having your feelings and experiences.
- Nobody can "make you feel" anything. If you blame someone for how you feel you are wrong.

Presented here is Anger Alternatives understanding and belief of the various forms of anger attitudes.

- **Addictive** - "I need." Needing to have something. Addictions can be to alcohol, drugs, Rx, work, love, sex, food, pornography etc.. Anything that is a patterned and compulsive behavior might be an addiction. Most, if not all, addictions and a great deal of substance abuse are behaviors intended to medicate anger. Whatever the substance, if it is used to escape, it is anger related. Patterns of addictions are usually learned. If the addiction creates an altered state, that addiction likely needs to be addressed before the anger can be managed accountably.
- **Aggressive** - "You do." An aggressive person is one who tells others by making "you" statements and telling others about themselves. An aggressive person wants to control, and believes there is no other way. An aggressive person usually approaches issues and needs by making unilateral decisions or giving orders to others. Aggressive is a fear of not being in control, distrust of others and a need to exert control.
- **Depressive** - "I can't." Situational depression is often about feeling powerless. Anger and shame emotions are set loose blaming one's self for not being able to manage something the way one expects he or she should. Situational depression is often learned, expressing powerlessness, shame and anger. (Managing anger can also be a powerful ally to a chemically depressed person.)
- **Passive** - "I don't want to bother you." A passive person has learned somewhere to believe he is not entitled to "receive". Often a passive person will feel that if he or she does receive, somebody else might have to do without. Often a passive person has been taught that if he or she asks, it will draw attention that might be embarrassing, hurtful or shaming. Risking is hard for passives.
- **Passive-Aggressive** - A Passive-Aggressive person handles issues and deals with needs and wants by "coming in the back door". A Passive-Aggressive person might ask for something that is different from the "real" want. He or she directs the interaction to accomplish the real want, without it ever being named. Usually this person learned somewhere that being direct is risky and doesn't work.
- By intention or by conditioning all of the above attitudes can be manipulative.

- **Shame** - The message that there is something wrong with a person or a thing. It is an opinion based on expectations that is projected on others or internalized by oneself. It is an attitude that controls through disrespect, discounting and judgment. It is important to distinguish shame from guilt. Guilt is a legitimate feeling based on a values system, that comes from feeling bad about having done something wrong.
- Shame, by intention or conditioning, is a manipulative feeling or behavior.

Anger and health

- **The Physical and Biological Development of Anger**
- We all know what it feels like to get angry: Often our heart races, our hands shake, we start to breathe faster or break into a sweat. That is what happens when our bodies are gearing up for a fight.
- Anger triggers our flight-or-fight response, an evolutionary adaptation that prepares us to react quickly to a perceived threat.
- When we become angry, the amygdala (the emotional center of the brain) reacts by releasing neurotransmitters and stress hormones to the body and brain. These chemicals arouse our nervous system and create a burst of energy, which can be perceived as an elevated heart rate, hyperventilation, trembling, and more. We don't know it, but we're prepared to fight to the death or run for our lives.
- The amygdala reacts so quickly to threats that we often react to anger feelings before the prefrontal cortex (judgment and decision-making area of the brain) can catch up. In other words, our bodies respond to the flood of adrenalin and other stress hormones before our thinking brain has a chance to decide what to do.
- This nervous system arousal can last for hours or even days. It takes a long time to relax once we become angry. And while we are cooling down, our stress hormones are still above normal, which means that we are more likely to be irritated or to become angry again.
- You can learn to control your brain's reactions to anger by learning new behaviors. You can train your brain to ignore the initial fight-or-flight response to anger and learn how to use your judgment when you are angry.

Physical Health

- Mismanaged anger can have a long-term, negative effect on health. In terms of physical health, it doesn't matter if you tend to lash out in rage or repress your anger. If you constantly struggle with your anger, your stress hormones will be far above normal, which can

result in illness, injury, and even death.

- **Chronic anger problems compromise the immune system, making us more susceptible to colds and sickness. Researchers have found connections between anger and physical illnesses, such as strokes, coronary heart disease, gastric and respiratory conditions, and some researchers have theorized that high stress levels are a risk factor in developing diabetes and even cancer.**
- **Anger is also a mortality risk, especially for women. In one long-term study, women who often suppressed their anger had three times the mortality rate than women who did not. A 2000 study published in Circulation Magazine found that among men and women with normal blood pressure, people who were chronically angry were two times as likely to develop coronary heart disease and three times as likely to have a heart attack, compared to the least-angry subjects.**
- *Anger -- as well as anxiety, depression and other negative emotions --are a part of life...But if people find that they have them chronically and at high levels and can't seem to get away from it, I view it like pain. It's a signal that something needs to change. This is not how it's supposed to be.*

Laura Kubzansky, PhD, MPH, as quoted in WebMD

Mental Health

- **Anger and stress also have an effect on our mental well-being. Although everyone reacts to stress differently, for some people a move, a lost job, or the death of a loved one can lead to clinical depression.**
- **For people who don't know how to express their emotions, depression can manifest as anger. One way of understanding depression is that it is anger directed inward. If you don't know how to manage or express your emotions, they don't go away, they fester inside. There can be a vicious cycle of anger and depression; the pain of depression feeds anger, and anger feeds depression.**
- **Maurizio Fava, MD, and Jerrold F. Rosenbaum, MD - American Journal of Psychiatry, 1998, have studied anger in people with depression or anxiety disorders. They have found that anger attacks are intense episodes of anger that resemble panic attacks. In their studies, they have found that 30 to 40 percent of depressed people experience anger attacks. Participants who did not have depression or anxiety disorders did not have anger attacks.**
- **In another study, 30 percent of subjects who had panic or anxiety disorders experienced anger attacks. Additionally, people who had an anxiety disorder and anger attacks were also more likely to be depressed than participants who did not have anger attacks.**

- **Anger attacks can be mistaken for panic attacks, which are often associated with panic or anxiety disorders. Panic attacks can be triggered by certain situations. Panic disorders can often be successfully treated with medication and therapy, especially Cognitive Behavior Therapy. If you experience panic attacks, you should talk to your health care provider about treatment options.**
- **If you don't know how to manage your anger, there can be severe repercussions on your physical and mental health. By learning how to identify the sources of your anger and respond to them, you will not only improve your physical and mental well-being, you will learn how to channel your anger.**

Anger and relationship

- **Is there anger in your relationship? Are you in a relationship with someone with an anger problem?**
- **Love shouldn't be a burden. Relationships can feel like an obligation or a trap if either you or another has an anger problem. If you are in such a relationship, it is likely you also have an anger problem.**
- **Misdirected anger can undermine, disrupt and damage family, social and professional relationships. Behavior that is abusive, destructive, controlling and manipulative is anger being acted out. Aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, and many kinds of depressive anger behaviors can be huge problems and contribute major stress, disruption and dysfunction in a relationship.**
- **All behavior is learned, and what is learned can be unlearned. Regardless of how you were taught to react when you are angry, you can learn how to recognize and change aggressive and passive behaviors. You can learn to respond to difficult situations in different and healthy ways.**
- **Anger Alternatives is an educational training program. We teach tools to recognize feelings of anger, and tools to respond to anger constructively and appropriately without shame or fear.**
- **With these tools you can learn to:**
 - **control reactionary behavior**
 - **recognize and control the sources of anger**
 - **separate anger feelings from behavior**
 - **honor your needs and wants and those of others**
 - **set limits and boundaries**
 - **identify what it is you want in relationship and in your life**
 - **give and receive love without aggression, criticism, guilt or shame**
- **Individuals, couples and families can learn to manage destructive anger related behaviors and build and maintain respect-based relationships.**
- **If you or someone you love have a history of abuse or domestic violence:**
- **This does not mean you have to continue the cycle. People can**

change.

- You can learn new behaviors and skills that are not aggressive and are non-violent.
- You can learn to stop being passive and move past being indecisive.
- You can learn to manage anger and shame and learn to control situational depression.
- You can learn skills that can become a source of personal power and pride in your life.

Anger and work place

- *Look for Solutions Based in Mutual Respect and Without Shame*
- *By Jerry Medol and Rusty Fleischer*
- As we hear the disturbing news of another incident of workplace violence ending in tragic results, we often think, "Could this have been prevented?"
- Nearly 5 percent of the 7.1 million private industry businesses in the United States had an incident of workplace violence within the 12 months prior to completing a 2005 survey on workplace violence prevention, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Although about a third of these establishments reported that the incident had a negative impact on their workforce, the majority of these establishments did not change their workplace violence prevention procedures.

Prevention

- Many workplace violence incidents could be prevented with awareness and an action plan. An act of violence is an advanced expression of anger, just as anger-related behavior is an advanced expression of stress.
- Often companies falsely choose what seems to be the "easier" path by classifying a particular employee's behavior as being "problematic" and an "isolated" situation. The human resources manager may be involved, and the employee may be reprimanded and/or referred to an employee assistance program. But does that resolve the situation? Are there more problem situations left unseen? Could the situation have been resolved in a more creative and effective way?

Anger Signs

- As an employer, it is important to recognize an employee with anger issues and be alert to behaviors that can be signals, such as:
- Reactionary with situations or with co-workers
- Irritability and overreacting to minor issues.
- Critical, complaining about work, fellow workers or superiors

- **Negativity and alienation**
- **Trying to control or manipulate fellow workers or superiors**
- **Frequent tardiness or absenteeism**
- **Lack of cooperation with fellow workers and superiors**
- **Not accepting responsibility or accountability**
- **Procrastination in completing assignments**
- **Difficulty understanding instructions**
- **Anger-related behavior and incidences of violence are symptomatic of personal stress issues and challenges the employee is facing. There are no limits to the ways stress can affect an employee's behavior, whether it's source is personal, family, health, marital, financial, or some work-related fear or conflict. These behaviors also have a direct effect on the performance and productivity of the employee and his or her work environment.**
- **It is essential to have good prevention policy and strategies to dissipate the negative energy and avoid possible violence.**

Providing Relief

- **Stay calm and don't react. Remember that anger is not danger. Anger means that something is not all right. It is likely that your employee is in an agitated and defensive state, so you need to slow down, take a deep breath and be open to hearing and caring about what that person is saying to you. Especially listen to hear what it is that is not right.**
- **Show respect by showing that you care. Take an honest interest in the situation. An employee who does not feel cared about can become more alienated and isolated.**
- **Listen, encourage and support. This person is looking for someone to feel safe with and to feel cared about. Share opinions and feelings to discover the real problem. Try to help find a creative solution. You don't have to agree with your employee.**
- **Leave fault-finding out of the conversation. Blame doesn't help and it puts people on the defensive. Don't focus on what is wrong. Focus on what is needed.**
- **Seek professional help. Anger management classes that help employees learn to express themselves and communicate without reacting can change the relationship and save a good employee.**
- **Remember that an employee with anger is not an enemy, and anger is not violence.**
- **An employee with anger is a person needing to be cared about. Showing care is the best way to find out if you can satisfy the need of that employee. If that troubled employee responds to being cared about, and strives to find a workable solution, the day will end well.**
- **If you showed you care, and found that your employee is not willing to work toward a solution, you can be satisfied that you have done**

your best and will have documented the development of the situation. You will have pre-empted conflict and additional stress, and that day also will have ended well.

- **Solutions based in mutual respect and without shame, end well.**

Anger and addictions

- **Through sex, work, alcohol, food or drugs, addicts seek escape from their emotions and surroundings. Addictions have long been linked with anger and aggression. Alcohol and drugs can lower inhibitions and be an excuse for bad behavior. Addictive substances can fuel destructive rages, allowing people to express their anger in abusive ways, or they can be a way to dampen unwanted or overpowering feelings.**
- **Historically, substance recovery and support groups have often counseled people in recovery from addiction to avoid situations where they feel angry. Recovering addicts can be overwhelmed by emotions that are raw and new. The recovery process can also bring up past traumas which have been suppressed by addictive behavior. Being in recovery is an anger condition. An addict is deprived of the crutches they have relied on and has to face the issues they spent years and energy avoiding.**
- **Anger is a major issue in gaining sobriety and it can be a cause of relapse.**
- **Dealing with the wounds and losses of a lifetime requires a recovering person to face the pain and deep hurt he has been avoiding and medicating.**
- **By teaching new coping skills using RT© and PAF©, Anger Alternatives can help you get in touch with your anger. We teach tools to respond to anger, to overcome old and destructive behaviors and establish respect based relationships.**

Tips on how to respond to anger situations

- **Step Back and Breathe**
- **Count to ten before you say or do anything and be mindful of your breathing. If you still don't feel calm, count to ten again...and breathe.**

Ask yourself:

- **What am I angry about?**
- **What is hurting me?**
- **What is going on that is not ok for me?**

- **Did this person intend to hurt me?**
- **When possible, remove yourself from the source of the stress and anger**
- **Go for a walk or exercise. Moderate physical activity can be a productive outlet for your emotions. Besides releasing pent-up energy, your general physical feeling will improve.**
- **Avoid emotionally charged and strenuous workouts, they can feed into the anger.**
- **Imagine a calm relaxing scene.**
- **Remember a time when you felt at peace.**
- **Close your eyes, and travel back there.**
- **Allow yourself to be there for a while and feel yourself release.**
- **Empathize with the other person.**
- **Try to see the situation from his or her point of view.**
- **Remember that there is always more than one way to see anything.**
- **Write in a journal. Keep track of your anger:**
 - **What did "I" get angry about?**
 - **What did "I" do or say in response?**
 - **How did "I" feel, physically and emotionally?**
- **By identifying your sources of anger, you can learn to anticipate and respond to anger situations.**
- **Use "I" statements when talking about the problem or situation instead of criticizing or blaming the other person. "I" am upset that the kitchen didn't get cleaned after dinner," instead of "Why is the kitchen still a mess?", or "You should have cleaned it!"**
- **Stop Brooding or Stewing. "Mind talk" is a major anger signal and one of the most destructive things you can do to yourself.**
- **Rage starts when you lose control of your own thoughts or feelings.**
- **You can control what you say.**
- **Talk to the person you have anger with.**
- **Share your feelings with a close friend or family member.**