

ENDING THE CYCLE OF RAGE

If you are recovering from an addiction, there is a good chance that you have experienced rage. Uncontrollable blow-ups are common in people who have maladaptive ways of coping with emotions. There are steps you can take to defuse the rage detonator. A good place to start is to become familiar with the cycle of rage:

1. Rage often is rooted in your expectations of how another person should behave.
2. People invariably fail to live up to your expectations of them.
3. In your disappointment, your feelings generally get hurt.
4. Rather than express those hurt feelings, you suppress or stuff them down.
5. The unresolved feelings ferment and turn to anger, soon to bubble to the surface as rage.
6. In your resentful silence, you begin feeling like a victim.
7. You feel like you get walked on all the time, so you think, why not let them have it?
8. The rage explodes uncontrollably.
9. Afterwards, you are back to the beginning, feeling guilty about your actions and resentful that others don't do what you expect.

Working on your rage will be hard work but will pay off later. Eventually, you will be able to alter your expectations of other people and express yourself when your feelings are hurt, thereby short-circuiting the rage cycle.

STEPS FOR WORKING ON YOUR RAGE

- Write down a rage history, a list of incidents that in the past have set you off. To start with, complete three columns – one each for the incident that led to the rage episode, you're feeling at that time and the result.

For example, you might write, "I was furious when my date didn't show up and didn't bother to call me." Under the next column the entry likely would say, "I felt abandoned." The last column could say, "I phoned him, called him horrible names, and ended our relationship."

- Once you have made the list, add another column as you sit quietly and recall the more subtle feelings that came with the incidents. These might include shame, regret, or confusion.
- In a fifth column, write down an alternative action that might have helped you resolve the feelings without the fallout of rageful action.
- Now make a list of your fears. (Anger has its roots in fear.) You can make this list by looking at the feelings listed already. The list may indicate fears of "abandonment, disappointment, economic insecurity, imperfection, etc. Be aware of your fears and work with a professional counselor or a mentor to help you lessen the influence of fear in your life.
- The last task is to make an "amends" list. This identifies all the people who have been hurt because of your outbursts of rage. By saying that you are sorry, you will soothe painful guilt feelings and be in a better position to deal with new feelings as they occur.

NEW DIRECTIONS

It is vital that you keep yourself out of victimizing situations. You must own your own behavior and be aware that all of your actions have consequences. Depending on your choices, these consequences either will be growth producing or victimizing.

You will need to devote yourself to rigorous honesty in your emotional life. If your feelings get hurt, you must address the hurt as soon as possible. Learning to say, "When you didn't call, I was very hurt," may not be easy, but you soon will find it is a lot simpler than picking up the emotional pieces after a rage attack.

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