

## **Controlling your anger before it controls you**

By Craig Miller

Anger is a normal, usually healthy, human emotion that can be a natural way of protecting our self when we feel in danger. However, when it gets out of control and turns destructive, it can lead to problems – at work, in your personal relationships and in the overall quality of life. When your mind becomes focused on negative thoughts such as placing blame, striking out, and seeking revenge, your behavior may become impulsive and hurtful with actions or words that may be destructive to the people around you. When anger is used to intimidate others this can cause the people who receive the anger to become hurt, defensive, hostile, emotionally hurt, and even resentful. Anger can impair your health by putting yourself at higher risk for physical illnesses such as high blood pressure or heart disease and emotional illnesses such as depression, mood swings, or emotional outbursts. These emotional and physical conditions can make you less productive, less motivated with life and feel as though you are a victim instead of an individual trying to seek a solution. On the opposite side of the spectrum, angry people can tend to be on a constant mental high, controlling others with their words and hot headed attitudes while expecting to get their way without questions from others. Either way, people who act out of hurtful anger are acting out their own insecurities and need to control others because of their own unresolved anger from being controlled by others in their own life.

Anger can be triggered by both external and internal events. You can be angry in response to a specific person or event and could also be a result of worrying or brooding about personal problems. When we are angry our body reacts through adrenaline and other chemicals being added to the bloodstream; the heart pumps faster; blood pressure rises; and muscles become tense. These changes generate energy that is needed for action and shift the body into “high gear”. Memories of traumatic events earlier in life can also trigger angry feelings with these resultant bodily changes, which can either be helpful to protect you from similar dangers or generate explosive anger that can be destructive to others.

Since anger is often a natural response to real or perceived threats; it inspires powerful feeling and behaviors, which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we feel physically threatened. A certain amount of anger is necessary to our survival against those threats. However, a past history of unresolved emotional, mental, or physical situations (for example, abuse, neglect, disappointments, or feeling disrespected) can accumulate into anger over time. This accumulated emotion can often come out in bursts of anger when similar situations in the present trigger the unresolved emotional memories of the past.

To recognize the emotions that can be unhealthy, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you think you have to yell at people so they don't mess up?
- Do you see the world with cynical mistrust and believe anger is always justified?
- Do you get upset quickly when something or someone disappoints you?
- When you are driving, do you get angry when another driver gets in your way?
- Whenever you get upset do you do one or more of the following: yell, argue, stomp your feet, slam the door, throw things, hit (or want to hit) people?

If you experience some of these actions you may be reacting with anger that is controlling you and chances are there have been circumstances in your past that have created the habit of angry responses. Counseling can be very beneficial to learn the origin of this emotion and begin to change how you respond to life situations. The emotional, spiritual, social, and vocational needs should be addressed, as they become appropriate. There are treatments that can eliminate the origins of the anger in order to eliminate the inappropriate anger response. If you have lived with anger most or all your life, chances are you will not see the behavior as a problem. If someone comments that you appear or sound angry most of the time, do yourself and everyone else around you an even bigger favor, get some help with your anger.

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