

Managing Anger

*People experiencing grief - young and old alike - can become so wrapped up in their emotions that at times **ANGER** can become a focal point in their lives. Talking through their feelings in Rainbows helps most participants find their way through their anger to healing. We found this article had some interesting insights into anger too, so we are sharing it with our readers with permission.*

MANAGING ANGER

Like love, grief and happiness, anger is a basic, human emotion. It serves an important survival function by communicating to ourselves and to others that something is wrong.

How we express our anger is something we learn. As children, we may have learned from one or both parents that anger can be used to get attention or to get one's way. Or we may have learned that we should show the good emotions - love and happiness, for instance - and keep bad emotions like anger inside.

Because we learn how to express anger, we also can learn how to manage it. This is particularly important for anyone who handles anger inappropriately - by hurting others or themselves or by making poor decisions in fits of rage.

Instead of expressing your anger in either of these ways, try this four-step approach:

Admit it.
Explore it.
Express it.
Drop it.

The next time you feel angry, admit it to yourself. Don't deny feeling angry or try to cover it up.

Then, explore why you're angry - get to the source of the emotion. If it's something someone said to you, ask yourself why it made you angry. If it's something someone did - or didn't do - search for the reason you are angry.

Expressing your anger is the next step. If you believe you might express yourself in a hostile rage, find a way to calm yourself down first - take a few deep breaths or go for a walk. When you feel you can discuss the issue without exploding, do so. If your anger begins to build while you're expressing yourself, calm yourself down again.

The final step may be the hardest. It 's also the most important of all. Once you've let the object of your anger know how you feel, drop it. Whether the object of your anger changes or not, you've done all you could by expressing your anger in a healthy way.

Ways NOT To Handle Anger

Anger can range from mild annoyance over a wait at the doctor's office, to red-faced rage over something another driver did on the freeway.

Using the four steps just described - admit it, explore it, express it and drop it - can help you to better manage anger. Researchers also have identified four other ways in which we may respond to feelings of anger - each of which has serious drawbacks.

Denying that you're angry - or not being able to even identify that you're angry - is called evasion. But evading anger only increases stress and may lead to such stress-related illnesses as headaches and depression (some counselors believe depression is unexpressed anger turned inward.) To know that you are angry but to still keep it inside is called containment. Yet boxing up anger only delays its expression. Eventually, anger may lead to stress or stress-related illness or an angry outburst or temper tantrum.

Displacement occurs when you take your anger out on something other than the object of your anger. A wife who gives away her husband's golf clubs because of something he said or the co-worker who sabotages a work project because he's angry over working conditions are examples of displacement. Indirect expression occurs if you're angry for a specific reason, but blame your anger on something else. For instance, you may be angry at your teenaged son for his poor study habits, but instead of addressing his study skills as the source of your anger, you pick fights over the use of the phone.

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