Coping with Anger and More

Feeling hurt is not the same as exhibiting anger. Mental health requires neurochemical and metaphysical harmony/balance.

Call 253.299.6556 for an appointment.

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Anger

One out of five Americans has an anger management problem. Anger is a natural human emotion and is nature's way of empowering us to "ward off" our perception of an attack or threat to our well being. Some anger is also faked to control others and avoid real issues.

The problem is not anger, the problem is the mismanagement of anger. Mismanaged anger and rage is the major cause of conflict in our personal and professional relationships.

Domestic abuse, road rage, workplace violence, divorce, and addiction are just a few examples of what happens when anger is mismanaged.

Anger usually begins with some emotional hurt; that is, in being threatened or frustrated in some way. Adrenaline pumps into your bloodstream. Your heart rate jumps. Your blood pressure surges. You feel insulted and threatened.

However, even people who cannot list off the "Seven Deadly Sins," Pride, Wrath, Envy, Lust, Greed, Gluttony, and Sloth, know that there is something wrong about ill expressed anger. Well, what is it?

Wrath, or getting angry, refers to one way that people manage the feeling of being hurt and insulted: usually by loud, cruel, hate-filled words. And often the hate erupts into physical violence.

So the problem is not with feeling irritated by an insult, which can be managed quite peacefully, believe it or not, but with a desire for revenge that becomes hurtful and abusive.

Uncontrolled anger, therefore, has no place in a family because, to be healthy, a family should be oriented toward love, growth, and support, not revenge and hostility.

As sure as there are marital problems, there are many couples who resort to violent confrontation. Those who seek to console, to understand, and to love are strong in wisdom, and violence has been said to be the last resort of the weak.

Although some people claim differently, domestic violence is not so much a political problem as it is a psychological problem rooted in an unwillingness to take responsibility for one's own life. Granted, there are some persons, male and female, who are so filled with frustration and anger that they will attack anyone, including children, and pets without provocation. But just as often there is provocation, and violence becomes a sly family dance.

There are even some people so good at subtle provocation that they always come off looking like innocent victims. It is a dirty business overall.

Even in a case that seems "political," for example, the wife wants to work outside the home against her husband's wishes, the real problem derives from a lack of loving communication that is genuine and honest. The woman harbors anger and frustration toward her husband and criticizes him at every opportunity; the husband feels threatened, rejected, and humiliated, often triggering traumatic memories of abuse he suffered as a child.

And violence erupts because real communication has degenerated into a power struggle. Neither partner has approached the problem from a position of empathy and unconditional acceptance of the needs of the other. And when empathy is lacking, everyone, including the children, suffers.

As for those who are abused by violent offenders, there can be many reasons why a person gets involved with someone prone to violence. Sometimes it is a matter of having been abused as a child and unconsciously seeking out the "familiar." Sometimes it is a matter of being attracted to the illusions of control and power in another person that on the surface...
seem protective but that only mask the underlying aggression and violence. And sometimes it is a matter of having a rebellious and argumentative nature of oneâ€™s own that â€œplays offâ€• the hostility of another.

In any event, once subjected to violence, a person can begin to perceive the violence from the perspective of an external locus of control and can then make the tragic mistake of trying to appease the offender. Unfortunately, this only makes the victim all the more susceptible to further manipulation by the offender.

The only real solution then is to (a) seek physical safety; (b) learn to recognize the dark human capacity to harm others in order to make oneself feel powerful; (c) encourage the offenderâ€™s healing through proper treatment; (d) work to achieve oneâ€™s own capacity for forgiveness; and, (e) before your problems worsen, seek beneficial individual therapy, and marriage or family therapy.

A good start would include a call to our office (253-880-3065) to schedule an appointment with a fully-licensed and board certified psychiatry practitioner (Scot Paris, MN, ARNP) who can perform these therapies, and, if needed, also perform individual psychiatric evaluations and diagnostic services, that may also include laboratory testing, imaging procedures (such as an MRI), and medication management.

The beginning of the solution to all family problems is to realize that just as plants canâ€™t grow in bad soil unless you add to the soil whatever is needed to make it healthy, so children and marriage partners cannot flourish unless you give them whatever support and encouragement they need to become independent and responsible.

What a child or partner needs might not be what you had expected, or wanted, and you must be ready to change, or they and you will suffer.

It is unfortunate, but parents who do not raise their children with truly unselfish love thereby contribute to the childâ€™s tendency to fall into seeking acceptance from the world, and then these wounded children have their own children who may start the cycle all over again.

Therefore, itâ€™s important for all family members to be aware of what other members are experiencing, and healthy communication within a family becomes an essential element of this awareness. All too often, communication becomes unhealthy and takes the form of sarcasm, innuendoes and hints, or not saying anything at all (e.g., forms of verbal assault, avoidance, and denial).

In contrast, healthy communication is direct, immediate, and clear, and it is a good model for learning healthy assertiveness. It depends on Facts, Opinions, Emotions, and Needs.

Therefore, remember that healthy communication generally involves both emotions and facts, unless the situation (e.g., an emergency) specifically requires one side or the other (e.g., emotions) to be suppressed.