

Anger Management: The Problem

What is anger?

Anger is a defence against pain. It's a defence mechanism but when it's expressed appropriately it's a healthy feeling, when it's expressed inappropriately it is a way of defending oneself.

Why do we get angry?

The reason we get Angry is because it's a way of us trying to avoid feeling whatever emotional pain that we feel. But primarily we get angry as a way of communicating our thoughts and our feelings. Unfortunately, when we do so without any skill it becomes inappropriate and dangerous.

Is anger always a bad thing?

Anger is not a bad thing at all. Unfortunately most people see Anger as negative because of the way it is communicated and expressed. But when Anger is expressed appropriately it is both healthy, it is both healing, transformative. And a way of including intimacy, connection and communication in a relationship.

What is the difference between anger and rage?

The way I describe anger is anger is when I communicate my feelings with my eyes open. Rage is when I communicate my feelings with my eyes closed. When we talk about blind rage it's no relationship to what it is that I'm saying, what it is that I'm feeling or what it is that I'm even communicating, expressing. It's uncontrollable and the individual has absolutely no awareness of the effect and the consequences of their rage.

What is the difference between anger and assertiveness?

There is not a lot of difference between anger and assertiveness if the anger is being communicated and expressed in an appropriate way, but I would say that there is one way of distinguishing the difference. That would be when someone is being assertive they are usually very [cool](#), very calm and very collected and they will keep repeating themselves until they get their response that is appropriate to what their needs are.

Who's more angry- men or women?

It's really interesting, in recent months what I've been getting from the media is that there's been research that's been done. Women are definitely expressing their anger much more than [men](#) are. But about three years ago, I recognized that women were certainly more angry than men, and they have every reason to be so. We did some research into that three years ago and what we discovered, is that women were actually more angry at home, and men were more angry in the workplace. But in the last few years, women have become more angry in the workplace as well. So there is evidence that suggests that women are definitely more angry than men.

Are people angrier than they used to be?

People are definitely much more angry than they used to be, and there's a lot of research that's gone into that. There's a lot of research that was done in the seventies, in the sixties, and study in the fifties. I would say that just from the point of view of our organization we have found an increase in calls, an increase in desperation, both by email, people logging on to our website, of course, and people buying and reading my book. Anger is certainly on the increase and it isn't going away.

Why are people angrier than they used to be?

What you find is that when you place people into very condensed closed environment, they start to become more and more aggressive towards each other. You can see that on our roads in terms of road rage, you can see in supermarket trolley rage, you can see it when people standing in queues, queue rage. But I think that's one part of it, the other part of it is that as our constitutional rights become eroded, which they are on a daily basis, we have less and less freedom than we had 10, 15, 20 years ago. That is another reason why people become angry in a way that they are becoming angry.

What is present tense anger?

Present tense anger is when a person is a mature adult and is able to communicate their thoughts and feelings which is non abusive and doesn't involve any drama or any hysterics. Where I am able to say to you: I feel angry with you, I can tell you why I feel angry with you and I can tell you what I need from you. That usually resolves itself in about 30 seconds to about 2 minutes.

What is regressive anger?

Regressive anger is what we call historical anger, and usually that kind of anger has trauma associated with it; historical trauma, unresolved trauma from the past. So what will happen is, when somebody experiences this historical regressive anger, it triggers a lot of thoughts and feelings from their past, which is unresolved, and it gets exaggerated in the presence; it gets aggravated in the presence. And at that point the person over-reacts to the situation that they're in.

What is a trigger?

Often I'm asked, "What is a trigger, and what are these triggers related to?" A trigger is specifically related to something that somebody does or says that a person who has an anger management problem will react to. So that could be somebody arriving late. That could be somebody who says something inappropriate or disrespectful. That's what they call a trigger.