

by Wanda Walborn

Why Am I So Angry?



Dealing appropriately with what triggers anger

Violence levels are on the rise in our nation and world, and the Church is not exempt from its impact. As those who love God, how do we address anger as a natural part of our soul care and then help others diffuse the anger in their lives too? There are many forms of anger, so don't be too quick to assume that you are not an angry person.

Anger is a strong feeling of displeasure and antagonism aroused by a sense of injury or wrong. Healthy anger can act as a powerful force for producing change in our lives at every level. It can be a gift that signals things are not OK.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ANGER?

There are three types of anger mentioned in Scripture. The first type includes a stewing or festering that brews just below the surface and doesn't come out. The Greek word for this type of anger is *parogismos* used in Ephesians 6:4, exhorting fathers to not provoke their children to anger.

The second type of anger occurs when something important to you is threatened or damaged. The Greek word is *orgizo* used in Ephesians 4:26—"Be angry (*orgizo*), but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger (*parogizo*) and give no opportunity to the devil." Paul is saying to feel the anger but not to sin by refusing to deal with the festering anger below the surface, which gives the devil a place in your life.

The third type of anger is what Galatians 5:20 refers to as "outbursts of anger" or "fits of rage." The Greek word is *thymos*, or rage, which passionately erupts and then cools down quickly, whereas the *orgizo* is indignation that gradually builds and settles in.

FIVE SIGNS OF INDIRECT ANGER

Many people don't think they have a problem with anger but are sarcastic, passive aggressive, numb, depressed, or apathetic. Each of these expressions is an indication of indirect anger.

1. Sarcasm

The word *sarcasm* means "tearing of flesh." It is intended to cut a person but is covered with a façade of humor.

2. Passive aggression

Passive-aggressive people pretend everything is fine. Then they say things to others, often acting like a victim, to get other people to confront or speak for them, because they can't approach the person with whom they have a problem. This type of manipulation is calculated and driven by anger.

3. Depression

Depressed people turn their anger inward rather than choosing to express it outwardly. In an attempt to keep the peace, they push down all negative feelings to avoid hurting the people around them.

4. Numbness

People who feel numb have shut down emotionally to survive. Long-term chaotic or abusive situations cause them to close off emotionally to cope. They no longer feel joy or pain. They live in a constant state of numbness, and their anger has become frozen.

5. Apathy

Apathy is a sign that passion and hope are gone. Not caring is the only way a hurting person endures the pain. Apathy is a logical conclusion to an emotional issue. Rather than caring and feeling continual hurt, fear, or powerlessness, a person chooses not to care so he or she can function in everyday life.

IMPERFECT PARENT

In 1992 I became pregnant with our fourth child. My anger toward the other three children surpassed the usual irritations or annoyances of typical childish behavior, and I found myself overreacting to almost everything they did.

If they spilled their drinks at the table, I went into a rage. If they started whining at the grocery store, I would take them into the bathroom or car and spank them. They were just tired and needed compassion, but what they got was frustration and an anger that forced them into unhealthy obedience. I felt disrespected, humiliated, and exposed as a bad mother because they wouldn't listen to me, and I used my power to make them pay. »

As I look back now, I realize I felt shame over their behavior. It makes no sense that I expected an 18-month-old, 2-year-old, and 4-year-old who were tired and hungry to handle a long day that ended at the grocery store without complaint. But I did. My parenting revolved around what other people would think and not about what my children needed.

This feeling of shame intimidated me into silence, and it wasn't until I heard a sermon at church that it was OK not to be OK that I felt a dam burst inside of me. I finally determined to be honest about my feelings and seek the help I needed.

When I told my husband about my over-the-top behavior toward our children, he initially passed my anger off as just a reaction to a bad day. I continued to confess to him my actions toward the children when he wasn't around to show him how bad it really was. Thankfully, he didn't respond with more shame but encouraged me to talk with our senior pastor (the one who preached the sermon about not being OK), and I began to meet with him and his wife for the next four months to deal with the root of my anger instead of the symptoms.

The interesting part of the story is that my husband was the associate pastor of the same church. I was a pastor's wife and treated my children that way. How shameful! I believed the lie that I should be perfect as the pastor's wife; therefore, my children should be perfect too.

WHAT'S UNDER THE ANGER?

During my prayer counseling sessions, I learned of six emotional causes underlying anger. Anger is what presents itself to others, but the primary emotion is underneath the anger. Understanding these six causes helped me identify the hurt and deal with it.

1. You're afraid.

Fear can be a strong emotion causing people to feel weak, vulnerable, and powerless, so they rise up in anger to push people away and regain a sense of control. The rush of adrenaline that accompanies anger makes a person feel strong and hides the hidden terror.

2. Your opinion is invalidated.

Everyone wants to be heard whether in a business meeting or at the dinner table. A person's opinion is simply his or her viewpoint on a topic. To criticize someone's viewpoint or, worse yet, ignore the person completely, can cause anger. This is often seen in autocratic homes where one parent is always right and children aren't allowed to have different opinions.

3. Your way is blocked.

This attitude is where road rage stems from—"Get out of my way!" Whether a person's car is cut off on the freeway, or the budget is cut dissolving the business plan, or a 2-year-old is told no, anger results. It is probably the most volatile of all the underlying causes because it erupts spontaneously.

4. You're hurt.

When a person is hurt, the offense is either turned inward, leading to despair or depression, or turned outward, leading to anger and bitterness. When turned inward, the person seeks to contain the anger by taking it out on him/herself, and self-rejection and self-hatred results. Turning the hurt outward can lead to blame and seeking revenge toward the person who hurt you. The healthy response to hurt is to feel the sadness, loss, and pain of the wounding.

5. Your personhood is attacked.

Name calling and inappropriate comments about your gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or beliefs fit this category. Oftentimes, these comments are made sarcastically or with a joking tone to get a laugh. Outwardly people might smile or play along, but inwardly the very core of the person has been touched, and it hurts.

6. Your expectations are unmet.

The angry person flies off the handle because of an unfulfilled expectation that is never spoken to the person receiving the anger. The angry person assumes the expectation is obvious, so he or she doesn't need to communicate it directly. It should just be known. This happens in any relationship with assumptions and poor communication.

Anger leaves a wake of pain. The next time you get angry, pause for a moment and sift through these six areas

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to identify the underlying cause of your anger. It can help you communicate clearly and avoid many arguments and disagreements in your relationships.

HOW DO I GET RID OF MY ANGER?

We can't rid ourselves of anger because it is an emotion; however, we can learn to appropriately deal with the »



real issue underlying the anger so it doesn't fester or spew in unhealthy ways to hurt people around us. Here are five ways to self-check your anger level for your personal soul care.

1. Acknowledge the way in which anger generally surfaces in your life—aggression, passive-aggressiveness, sarcasm, numbness, apathy, depression, or rage.

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify the underlying issue as the source: fear, invalidation, blocked goals, woundedness, attacks on your personhood, or unmet expectations.

3. Ask for help so you don't suffer in silence. Telling a close friend, spouse, or counselor about your anger disarms its power in your mind.

4. Grieve the loss accompanying the pain to process all the feelings surrounding the incident.

5. Choose to forgive the offender. Forgiveness does not always mean reconciliation for those who have hurt you

and may not ever involve a conversation with the other person. Rather, forgiveness eliminates bitterness from forming in your heart to torment you and cut off intimacy with God and those you love. Satan is a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Let us not allow our unresolved anger to be the entry point of our destruction.

It's been 24 years since I came clean with my husband and began to deal with my anger in a healthy way. I still feel anger, but it doesn't control me as it once did. You too can be free from anger's grip. Go beneath it and diffuse it. ■



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Grieving:

"IT'S OK TO CRY"

by Ron Walborn

Alliance Life, September/October 2016

Forgiveness:

THE STEPS TO FREEDOM IN CHRIST

(See step three on forgiveness and bitterness)

by Neil Anderson

Bethany House Publishers, 2004

PRAY for the PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

UZBEK



ETHNICITY

A TURKIC PEOPLE



27M

UZBEKS



Islam

MAJORITY RELIGION



20,000,000

LIVE IN UZBEKISTAN



PARTIAL TRANSLATION

BIBLE TRANSLATION INTO UZBEK LANGUAGE

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE UZBEKS

Many Uzbeks, especially men, travel to places like Russia or Turkey to find work. Labor migration is a big part of putting food on the table for families in central Asia.

These Uzbek migrant workers are sometimes more open to considering the gospel in their work settings than they would be at home. And as they often endure the status of the "undesirable but useful laborer," they experience needs for dignity, justice, and love that can be met by those in these places who minister in Jesus' name. Please pray that these ministries will be fruitful.

To receive a monthly prayer focus for the peoples of the world, e-mail pbd@cmalliance.org.

*Stats from joshuaproject.net



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