

Anger, what is it good for...almost absolutely nothing.

Ever get angry? Most people do from time to time; a few even wear it around like armor... everyday, waiting for a reason to fight.

The way that people use anger is much like the sport of boxing. Two opponents are in the ring together; their motivation is either to win or do some damage. Even if they spend time in their corners, they are strategizing and readying themselves for the next round. Each fighter is equipped with an arsenal of techniques that they hope will assure them a victory.

Anger was never intended to be used for everyday conflicts. Prehistoric man displayed this anger response to protect his family and himself from harm. It was and still is a survival response. But because most modern society no longer has to defend itself from saber tooth tiger or wild boar attacks, we have found a different use for it. Anger has become a tool that we use to protect ourselves from a different sort of pain...emotional pain.

What is anger anyway? Anger is a “primitive physical survival” response that we use to express a different emotion entirely. I describe anger as a physical response because there are physical changes that take place in our bodies when we get angry. These changes start in the brain through the release of a chemical called Adrenaline. The brain triggers the release of this chemical because we perceive ourselves as being threatened somehow and our brain is preparing our body to respond. Our perception of any given situation is based upon our life experiences leading up to the event, and our belief system. Complicated, I know. But, bottom line...our perception is our reality. And guess what? Everyone perceives things differently. Same situation + different perception = different response. It isn't the situation or event that causes us to get mad. It isn't what he said or she said that triggers our anger. It's how we perceive the situation...and we can change our perceptions. We control our emotional response.

I mentioned earlier that anger is a response to a different emotion entirely. We allow ourselves to trigger the anger response when our feelings are hurt, or we are afraid, disappointed, or things simply aren't going our way. This is a misuse of our physical survival response; and unfortunately we misuse anger all the time. It's become a habit, a knee jerk reaction to our emotional pain. Like the boxer, we engage in the fight with the victory or injury as our goal. Our arsenal is full of emotional strategies like insults, dredging up the past, put downs, threats, and manipulations designed to level our opponent. Ask yourself...is this outcome positive? Do the long-term effects of this habit of ours enhance our life and our relationships? Is there a better way to resolve our conflicts?

I believe that aside from survival, anger has no place in our lives.

“The strong man is not a good wrestler; but the one who controls himself when angry”, quote by the Prophet Muhammad.

It takes a very strong person to control himself or herself once angered. So much is working against them: emotional pain, unresolved issues, and the physiological changes that anger can trigger. If we succeed in calming ourselves down without resolving the issue, we have only stored our negative feelings away for another day. The anger

Anger and its physiological consequences have been linked to the development of chronically high blood pressure, heart attacks, stroke, premature death, as well as the destruction of interpersonal relationships. The harmful effects of a lifetime of anger on one family can be passed down through several generations.

I say, why get angry in the first place? Unless you are protecting your family or yourself from physical harm there is never a good reason for anger.

I can think of many examples in life where staying calm in the first place would produce a better outcome than allowing a situation to get out of hand (lion taming and snake handling, for instance). The most important of these examples, however, is within our everyday personal interactions. Please note, calm does not mean quietly seething. Approaching issues before they become emotionally charged can prevent us from losing control. When something is just starting to bother you, way before you have a lot of emotions built up over the matter, talk the situation out calmly and openly (no games, no defenses, no manipulations). Approach the discussion with the mindset of wanting to resolve the issue compassionately, rather than wanting to win. Open your mind to understanding the other person's position. Set aside any emotional display and seek out a positive resolution. It will always be easier, and the outcome more positive, if you approach a challenge from this perspective. Remember that everyone sees things differently; and so conflict can never be avoided. But if you see conflicts in a positive light, as challenges that are meant to build relationships, rather than destroy them, the rewards to you will be great.

Anger is nothing more than a bad habit and can be eliminated from your life altogether. You just have to work on it one day at a time. By replacing your negative thoughts with positive thoughts and feelings for others, and by having a compassionate heart, you will transform not only your life, but the lives of those around you.

To your health and happiness,

Jamie

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