

HOW TO USE YOUR ANGER

Most people think of anger as being synonymous with aggression and violence. Their image of anger is of a person hitting, throwing something or being physically threatening. This is not anger; these are the actions of a person who is out of control, violent and abusive. It is vital that we differentiate between anger and violence, because it is violence in all its various forms that destroys relationships and ultimately ourselves, not anger.

Anger is not inherently bad, in fact, it has a very important role and is essential for our well-being and survival. Anger is a signal that alerts us to the need for reorganisation and change in ourselves and our lives; it works in the same way as pain. Just as pain tells us when something is not good for our system and needs our attention, in the same way when we feel an irritation or anger rising within us, it too is telling us whatever is happening at that time is not good for us and we need to respond to that message. It is by ignoring these signals that we become enslaved and trapped by our anger, instead of seeing it as an informant, a messenger that comes to instruct and enlighten, we see it as a disruptive and unpleasant force which negatively affects our lives. We often feel unable to manage its potency and its need for some form of expression, so we socialise it and conform to common expectations. It is then that anger later leads to loss of control, abuse or violence.

If we are to use anger in accordance with its nature, we need to listen to our anger and respond to its important role in our lives and stop fighting against it which only enslaves us further in a spiral of anger, frustration and loss of control. We need to get to know our anger by forming a relationship with it. We need to find out how does our anger manifest itself? Under what circumstances? What are the main triggers for us and why are we affected in that way? These and many more questions can and will be answered if we form an alliance with our anger and stop seeing it as our enemy. Forming this kind of relationship with our anger provides us with important information about ourselves and helps us develop and define our own personal boundaries, sense of morality and code of ethics. Anger also helps us to connect with our core-self and offers us the wisdom and insight that comes from having a real connection with our inner world.

Honesty and negotiation are critical in the process of using anger more effectively. When we feel that sense of anger rising it is then that the need for honesty is so important, firstly to be honest with ourselves about what is being felt and then to be honest with those we need to express our feelings too. It is helpful to realise that our anger is nearly always about the way we have been affected or are indeed still being affected by a relationship in our life, whether that be connected to the work environment, a social situation, or a more intimate relationship such as a partner, friend, member of the family etc. The effect that the relationship has may be as a result of recent events or be due to something from the past that still haunts us in the present, which is quite common because we have so much from our past that we have not truly dealt with. Once we can be honest about our feelings, we then need to communicate them in an appropriate and constructive manner, so they do not further feed the cycle of anger and conflict, this calls for skills of diplomacy and negotiation. Negotiation means taking responsibility for the contribution we have made to the way we are feeling whilst airing our dissatisfaction about the situation to those who are involved. It is not about holding anyone else responsible for the way we are feeling or engaging in a blame game, it is simply about airing our feelings so that the potential for a dialogue that may lead to adjustment and change can take place. It is important to recognise that the changes which may need to take place, are changes we may need to make as well as the other parties involved in the situation. It is when anger is managed in this way that it enriches our lives.