

## **Sample Excerpt From The What Is Anger? Report...**

### **What Is Anger?**

Everyone has been angry and knows what anger is. Anger can vary widely (from mild irritation to intense fury) and can be sparked by a variety of things (specific people, events, memories, or personal problems). Anger is a natural and potentially productive emotion. However, anger can get out of control and become destructive and problematic.

So why do we get angry? People get angry when their expectations are not met -- whether those expectations are about the future, about themselves, or about others. When our expectations are unmet, we revert to illusions of control, "unrealistically expecting all people to behave and all situations to turn out as we think they should." Anger over these unmet expectations often leads us to blame others and shift aggression towards them.

Gary Ginter, a psychologist who specializes in anger management explains that there are several sources of anger: physiological, cognitive, and behavioral. Physiological anger is natural anger. In certain threatening situations, for instance when we are attacked physically, our bodies respond by making us physically angry.

Cognitive sources of anger are based on how we perceive things. These perceptions may be accurate...a situation may, indeed, be threatening, or they may not be. Sometimes we will perceive a threat, even though the external situation is not actually as dangerous as we think it is. In other words, there may be no real reason for anger, but our personal biases and emotions take over, leading to aggression.

Finally, behavioral sources of anger come from the environment we create for ourselves. Chronically angry people create an atmosphere in which others are aggressive in return, creating a cycle of anger.

### **Expressing Anger**

Anger is a natural response to certain threats. As a result, aggression is sometimes the appropriate response to anger, as it allows us to defend ourselves. Therefore, a certain amount of anger is necessary. In addition, anger can be useful in expressing how we feel to others. However, we cannot get angry with everyone and everything we encounter. As a result, we must learn to express our anger appropriately.

There are three main approaches to expressing anger -- expression, suppression, and calming. Expression involves conveying your feelings in an assertive, but not aggressive, manner. This is the best way to handle your anger. However, you must make sure that you are respectful of others and are not being overly demanding or pushy, as this will likely only produce aggression in return.

Anger can also be repressed and redirected. Essentially, you want to stop thinking about the source of your anger and focus on something else that can be approached constructively. However, you must be careful when repressing angry feelings.

Repressing anger with no constructive outlet can be dangerous and damaging, both physically and mentally. On the other hand, the old idea that you should simply "vent" or "let it all out" is discouraged by conflict experts, who claim that doing so is actually counterproductive, "an exercise in rehearsing the very attributions that arouse anger in the first place."

Finally, one can respond to anger by focusing on calming down -- controlling your external and internal responses (heart rate, blood pressure, etc.) to anger. Take deep breaths and relax. Several of these techniques are covered later in this article.

### **Social Rage**

The same issues that can arouse anger in individuals can also arouse anger in large groups. This concept of social rage, or social anger, is an important one for understanding conflict. Social rage is similar to personal rage, but it is generated by social issues and expressed by social groups. Examples of social rage are abundant: anger at immigrants over unemployment, hate crimes, homophobia, etc. Many of the factors at play in personal rage are also important in social rage, including humiliation and a sense of violation of expectations.

### **When Is Anger Good?**

Anger can serve very positive functions when expressed properly. Studies continue to show that anger can have beneficial effects on individuals' health, their relationships and their work. Socially, very positive changes can come from anger -- for instance, the civil rights movement of the 1960s or the women's suffrage movement in the early 20th century. On an individual level, scientists have shown angry episodes actually strengthen personal relationships more than half of the time.

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