

Regardless of how we call it – it is still Anger

We often fail to know we are angry because we hide it behind other reactions. Our anger often conceals itself behind a cloak of resentment, aggression, frustration, hate, fury, indignation, outrage, wrath, antagonism, crossness, hostility, bitterness, destructiveness, spite, rancor, ferocity, scorn, disdain, enmity, malevolence, and defiance.

Other people who are angry can be called mad, bitter, frustrated, griped, fed up, sore, excited, seething, annoyed, troubled, antagonistic or antagonized, exasperated, vexed, indignant, furious, provoked, hurt, irked, irritated, sick, cross, hostile, ferocious, savage, deadly, dangerous, on the offense.

Communication shattering (angry) behavior includes: to hate, wound, damage, annihilate, despise, scorn, disdain, loathe, vilify, curse, despoil, ruin, demolish, abhor, abominate, desolate, ridicule, tease, kid, get even, laugh at, humiliate, goad, shame, criticize, cut, take out spite on, rail at, scold, bawl out, humble, irritate, beat up, take for a ride, ostracize, fight, beat, vanquish, compete with, brutalize, crush, offend and bully.

WE CAN Stuff It **OR** Dump it?

SUPPRESS EXPRESS REPRESS OR CONFESS IT ??

**ANGRY BEHAVIORS HAVE TO BE REPLACED
WITH POSITIVE BEHAVIORS. EPH. 4:31-32**

RAGE --- Resentment --- Indignation

The Bible on Anger

(From More Communication Keys, by Norman Wright)

The Scriptures teach a balanced perspective on anger. We are to be angry at times, but for the right reasons. We are always to be in control of the intensity and direction of our anger. It is not supposed to dominate us or run out of control. Revenge, bitterness, and resentment are not to be a part of our life. We are to recognize the causes and our responsibility for our anger.

The Word of God has much to say about anger and uses a number of words to describe the various types of anger. In the Old Testament, the word for anger actually meant “nostril” or “nose.” In ancient Hebrew psychology, the nose was thought to be the seat of anger. The phrase “slow to anger” literally means “long of nose.” Synonyms used in the Old Testament for anger include *ill-humor* and *rage* (Esth. 1:12), *overflowing rage* and *fury* (Amos 1:11), and *indignation* (Jer. 15:17). Anger is implied in the Old Testament through words such as *revenge*, *cursing*, *jealousy*, *snorting*, *trembling*, *shouting*, *raving*, and *grinding the teeth*.

Several words are used for anger in the New Testament. It is important to note the distinction between these words. Many people have concluded that the Scripture contradicts itself because in one verse we are taught not to be angry and in another we are admonished to “be angry and sin not.” Which is correct and which should we follow?

One of the words used most often for anger in the New Testament is *thumos* which describes anger as a turbulent commotion or a boiling agitation of feelings. This type of anger blazes up into a sudden explosion. It is an outburst from inner indignation and is similar to a match which quickly ignites into a blaze but then burns out rapidly. This type of anger is mentioned twenty times (see for example Eph. 4:31 and Gal. 5:20). We are to control this type of anger.

Another type of anger mentioned only three times in the New Testament, and never in a positive sense, is *parorgismos*. This is anger that has been provoked. It is characterized by irritation, exasperation, or embitterment. “Do not ever let your wrath—your exasperation, your fury or indignation—last until the sun goes down” (Eph. 4:26, *AMP*).

The most common New Testament word for anger is *orge*. It is used forty-five times and means a more settled and long-lasting attitude of anger which is slower in its onset but more enduring. This kind of anger is similar to coals on a barbecue slowly warming up to red and then white hot and holding this temperature until the cooking is done. It often includes revenge.

There are two exceptions where this word is used and revenge is not included in its meaning.

In Ephesians 4:26 we are taught to not “let the sun go down on your anger.”

Mark 3:5 records Jesus as having looked upon the Pharisees “with anger.”

In these two verses the word means an abiding habit of the mind which is aroused under certain conditions against evil and injustice. This is the type of anger that Christians are encouraged to have—the anger that includes no revenge or rage.

Proverbs on Anger

(From the Amplified Version)

“Do not be quick in spirit to be angry or vexed, for anger and vexation lodge in the bosom of fools” (Eccles. 7:9) “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his own spirit than he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32). “He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls” (Prov. 25:28). “The beginning of strife is as when water first trickles [from a crack in a dam]; therefore stop contention before it becomes worse and quarreling breaks out” (Prov. 17:14). “Good sense makes man restrain his anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression or an offense” (Prov. 19:11). “Cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not yourself; it tends only to evil-doing” (Ps. 37:8). “Make no friendships with a man given to anger, and with a wrathful man do not associate, lest you learn his ways and get yourself into a snare” (Prov. 22:24-25).

" RAGE, RESENTMENT " AND " INDIGNATION "

Rage interferes with our growth and our relationships. Rage produces attacks (verbal or physical), tantrums, and revenge. It can destroy other people first and then ourselves.

Resentment is another loser. It breeds bitterness and can create passive-aggressive responses. Resentment can actually destroy us and, in time, other people as well.

Since we are rational creatures we can choose how we will respond to external events. In fact we have more control than we give ourselves credit for. Often, however, our past experiences, memories, and patterns of response tend to hinder us from exercising this control, but we can overcome these influences.

What is **indignation** and where does it fit into our system of responses? Indignation creates constructive actions to change injustice, to protect ourselves and others.

In his book on anger, *Anger, Yours and Mine and What to Do About It* (1981) Richard Walters compares the effects of all three: rage, resentment, and indignation.

Rage seeks to do wrong, resentment seeks to hide wrong, indignation seeks to correct wrongs.

Rage and resentment seek to destroy people, indignation seeks to destroy evil.

Rage and resentment seek vengeance, indignation seeks justice.

Rage is guided by selfishness, resentment is guided by cowardice, indignation is guided by mercy.

Rage uses open warfare, resentment is a guerrilla fighter, indignation is an honest and fearless and forceful defender of truth.

Rage defends itself, resentment defends the status quo, indignation defends the other person.

Rage and resentment are forbidden by the Bible, indignation is required.

Rage blows up the bridges people need to reach each other, and resentment sends people scurrying behind barriers to hide from each other and to hurt each other indirectly. Indignation is constructive: it seeks to heal hurts and to bring people together. Its purpose is to rebuild the bridges and pull down the barriers, yet it is like rage and resentment in that the feeling of anger remains.

Indignation is different from rage and resentment in attitudes and purposes.

Indignation concentrates on real injustice to other people and/or yourself.

With indignation there is realism. Energy is exerted only if there is a possibility of accomplishment.

Unselfishness is a component of indignation. When we are indignant about something we give or are willing to give, we admit our mistakes and even endure suffering.

An additional element is love. Out of a sense of love and concern for others, indignation arises and is expressed. A person feeling indignation is a person under control. He knows what he is doing and what he wants to express, and his responses are appropriate. Is this the way you respond to your spouse when you are angry? It is difficult to be indignant and not full of rage if we are not endeavoring to live the teachings of Scripture. If there is no fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5), what place would indignation find?

Anger :

The *American Heritage Dictionary* describes anger as a strong, usually temporary displeasure, but does not specify the manner of expressions. You can be just as angry while keeping silent as you can while yelling at someone. The words *rage* and *fury* are used to describe intense, uncontained, explosive emotion. Fury is thought of as being destructive, but rage can be considered justified by certain circumstances. Another word for anger is wrath—fervid anger that seeks vengeance or punishment. *Resentment* is usually used to signify suppressed anger brought about by a sense of grievance. *Indignation* is a feeling which results when you see the mistreatment of someone or something which is very important to you. A simple definition of anger is “a strong feeling of irritation or displeasure.”

You create your own anger. What happens outside of us—external events—do not make us angry. Situations and other people do not make you angry. Realizing that you are responsible for your anger is to your advantage. You have an opportunity to take control of your thoughts and your emotions. In most situations your anger will work against you and not for you. It can cripple you and make you quite ineffective. Anger can limit your capability to discover creative solutions.

Anger, WE CAN **STUFF IT** OR **DUMP IT?** **SUPPRESS IT EXPRESS IT REPRESS IT OR CONFESS IT??**

Fully acknowledge it inwardly; selectively express it outwardly according to God’s purposes. – Larry Crabb

ANGRY BEHAVIORS HAVE TO BE REPLACED WITH POSITIVE BEHAVIORS.

Get rid of all :

Bitterness

(resentfulness, harshness)

Rage and anger

(Indignation, violent anger, boiling up,

Fury, antagonism, outbursts)

Brawling and slander,

(Clamor and Abusive speech)

along with every form of malice.

And Be:

Kind

(goodness of heart)

and compassionate

(tender-hearted)

to one another,

forgiving each other,

(an action)

just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:31, 32

What can you do with your anger? There are several steps you can take to lessen anger and reduce inner tension.

Admit it and acknowledge it to God, asking Him for help in controlling it. Be slow to anger – be careful.

Identify the cause. Your anger is a symptom, the tip of the iceberg. What are your thoughts? Are you applying labels to your spouse? Are you trying to mind read? Are you operating on the basis of “shoulds” or “should nots”? Are you feeling hurt over some situation? Is there something that you are afraid of? Identify your fears. What are you frustrated over? Frustration is one of the biggest causes of anger. If you’re frustrated you probably have some unmet needs and expectations—probably unspoken.

Evaluate the reason for your anger. Is your anger directed toward your partner because he did something intentionally and knowingly to hurt or offend you? How do you know it was intentional?

Write out your responses to these questions: How is your anger helpful or useful? Is it going to help you build your relationship or reach the goal that you want? Will it serve God’s purposes? Will expressing my negative feelings serve a good purpose in ministering to my mate?

Apply Nehemiah 5:6-7. One way to “consult with yourself” is to make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of feeling and acting in an angry manner. Consider the short-term and long-term consequences of the anger. Look over the list and decide what is the best direction to move.

Another approach is to identify the hot thoughts and replace them with cool thoughts. Hot thoughts are the anger-producing thoughts. Cool thoughts are calm producing thoughts.

Anger:

1. What are some things that make you angry? How do you usually think when these things occur?
2. What is your self talk?
3. What are some of the possible explanations for the way your spouse is behaving?
4. Are you guilty of the same problem or a similar problem? Have you attempted to be constructive and positive in any of your discussions with your spouse about this problem? Will what you are about to say or do reduce the chance of your spouse repeating the same behavior?
5. What are three alternate statements you could make to your spouse to replace your usual response?

Write the above questions on a piece of paper and carry it with you.
As you find yourself starting to get angry take a brief time-out and look at your list.

If anger interferes, there are ways you can change the pattern.

Identify the cues that contribute to the anger and develop a plan of action for interrupting the pattern. Communicate that you are getting angry, and feel your control may be slipping.

A commitment from both of you not to yell or raise your voices and not to act out your anger is essential. You may need to agree to return to the issue at a time of less conflict, or intense emotion.

Ask your partner for help. This step is the clincher. Without it, not much progress can be made.

Take note of the material already given on establishing rules for handling conflict.

De-cue your spouse. If you have certain behaviors that tend to provoke anger from your spouse, you should eliminate those behaviors so that your spouse has no reason to retaliate.

Change the faulty thinking pattern that effects the relationship. The faulty beliefs will need to be exposed and challenged. Analyze and challenge the assumptions and eliminate any mind reading.

Redirect your focus from "who is right or wrong?" to "what are the behaviors involved and how do they affect our relationship?"

Before you express your indignation, there are two things you should do: (1) pray about your purpose, your attitude, and your words; (2) write out what you would like to say and visualize yourself saying it. Before you express your indignation, forgive the other person. Regardless of how the other person responds you then have nothing to lose! Why? Because you are not trying to win!

WHAT IF MY SPOUSE IS ANGRY AT ME

1. **Give the other person permission in your own mind to be angry with you.** It is all right. It isn't the end of the world and you can handle it.
2. **Do not change your behavior just to keep your spouse from being angry with you.** If you do you are allowing yourself to be controlled.
3. **Do not reward the other person for becoming angry with you.**
4. **Ask the person to respond to you in a reasonable manner.** Suggest that your spouse restate his/her original concern, lower his/her voice, and speak to you as though you had just been introduced. "A soft word turns away wrath." Prov 15:1
5. **If your spouse is angry you do not have to become angry also.**

What to do with Anger . . . (by Larry Crabb)

In handling emotions, it seems that the options are to either *stuff* them inside (resulting in stomach problems) or *dump* them on someone else (using outbursts of anger). Dr. Larry Crabb suggests the Biblical response is *(inwardly) to acknowledge your emotional experience to yourself and to God, and (outwardly) to subordinate the expression of your feelings to the purposes of God.*

A *goal* is an objective that is under our control. The biblical purpose for married people is to minister to their mates. Thus ministry becomes the goal, something we work at. A *desire* is an objective that we may legitimately and fervently want, but cannot reach through our efforts alone. The objective of having our partners love and respect us must be regarded as a desire. It is something we can only pray for. Whether we perceive our objective as a goal or a desire makes a great deal in what we do with it. *The proper response to a goal is a set of responsible actions; to a desire is prayer.*

“Suppose I confuse my goals and desires, as so many—perhaps most—husbands and wives tend to do. I make it my goal that my wife greet me warmly when I return home after a difficult day at work. If I am met at the door by a scowling woman who angrily wonders why I am late, then my goal is blocked. I feel anger. Should I share this anger with my wife? If I were to react to her hostile greeting with an expression of my irritation (“Hey, after a tough day, I wouldn’t mind a smile!”), my goal at that moment would be to hurt her back or to stop her from complaining or to generate enough guilt to make her change. None of these motives is compatible with the goal of ministry. They are manipulative and therefore sinful. What should I do with my anger?”

Consider the following actions:

Step 1: Be slow to anger. The Scriptures repeatedly exhort us to be careful when we feel angry. It is easy to express our irritation quickly for the wrong purpose and in so doing, to sin;

Step 2: Acknowledge anger. Although I am to guard against the instant, non controlled expression of anger, I am not to pretend the emotion is not there;

Step 3: Think through goals. I must realize that anger generally results when a goal is blocked. I should ask myself what objective I am seeking. If my partner is capable of blocking that objective, then it should never have been a goal. I need to re-label my objective as a desire (“I hope my wife greets me warmly”) and to reaffirm my commitment to the goal of ministry.

Step 4: Assume responsibility for the proper goal. To put substance into my commitment, I must determine what action I can take to minister to my wife. The goal of ministry always takes precedence over sharing the hurt from thwarted desires. Perhaps I could express understanding of her irritation (“Honey, I can understand that you’re angry because I messed up your dinner plans”) and show appreciation for her hard work (“I really appreciate the work you put into meals and laundry and everything else”).

Step 5: Express negative feelings if doing so serves a good purpose.

I may at this point (whether two minutes or two hours later) relate to my wife my annoyance with the way I was met at the door. If I am aware of my bitter spirit, I must tell her in an effort to remove any wall of retreat created by my anger. I may also express my anger if I judge that doing so will enable her to understand better how her behavior affects me. If she wants to minister to me (as I desire), then my sharing how I feel when she behaves a certain way will help her to reach her goal of ministry better.

If I express my negative feelings after carrying out steps 1 to 4 with the purpose of keeping bitterness from taking root or of making me more understandable (and therefore more vulnerable) to my wife, then the expression of emotion can be regarded as ministry. My wife may stay angry with me for coming home late; she may consign me to an evening of hostile neglect or incessant complaint. I cannot control what she does. If she responds to me in continued anger, she is sinfully wrong and I will feel hurt and angry. But I am responsible to sustain my commitment to minister to her. My goal in sharing how I feel must never be to exact revenge or to change my spouse.

How To Respond When Your Spouse Shares Feelings:

SOME GUIDELINES by Larry Crabb

Ways that Reject Feelings

1. Defend / Explain A common way to reject a feeling is to *defend* or *explain* yourself after your spouse tells you how he or she feels. The effect is to tune in to how *you* feel and to miss how your spouse feels.

'The reason I said that .. "What I meant was ..

2. Apologize *Apologies* offered too quickly before you let your spouse know that you understand the feelings that were shared usually mean nothing. They really amount to the message "I don't want to discuss this further and I don't really want to hear how badly I hurt you. Maybe a quick apology will end this painful conversation."

"I'm really sorry that . . . "I shouldn't have said that

3. Attack If your spouse tells you when you made her feel bad, then informing her when she made you feel bad is a subtle but very real and devastating *Attack*. The result will be either a long and heated series of counterattacks or a retreat into cold silence.

"I admit what I did was wrong, but you ... "Well, maybe you're right, but what I can't understand is why you ..

4. Advise When your spouse shares a burden or struggle, don't immediately offer *Advice*. The discouraged husband desired the encouragement of a wife who respected him, not the ideas of a counselor who thought he needed "help." Well-meaning wives often offer advice to troubled husbands, not realizing that the message their husbands hear is "Listen, you weakling, I'll tell you how to handle this, since you're making such a mess out of it!"

"Maybe you should ..." "It seems to me that if you ..

5. Disdain When your partner shares a feeling, never *Disdain* - telling him or her not to feel "that way." Even when you are trying to be encouraging, to inform someone not to experience an emotion he or she has just expressed often comes across as a putdown. Sentences like "Honey, you shouldn't feel that way" or "There's no reason to feel so worried (hurt, etc.);" should be avoided.

"I don't really see why you feel . . . "Gee, honey, there's no need to feel . .

6. Correct Another effective but subtle technique for rejecting feelings is to *correct* a person's evaluation of the problem that is generating an emotion. To tell the person what the problem "really is" and what he or she should therefore be feeling does not communicate acceptance. At some point, of course, it may be necessary to suggest an accurate perception of events, but to do so immediately after a feeling is expressed conveys rejection

"What I think you really mean is .. "I don't think you feel . .

Ways to Accept Feelings

1. Reflect the feeling back like a mirror

"It sounds as if you feel ..." "Guess you really felt . . when .

2. Clarify by describing what you heard and asking if you heard correctly.

"Are you saying that . . . "I wonder if you feel ..

3. Explore what was meant by asking questions.

"I'm not sure what you mean ... "When else do you feel like that? I don't quite understand how you feel about . .

4. Extend by suggesting other feelings that are related to what has been shared.

"You really felt . . . Did you also feel . . . "I can see that you feel. . . If I were in your shoes, I might also feel . . Do you feel like that?"

How to Respond When Your Spouse Shares Feelings

Worksheet # 10

One of the most difficult but important skills, to develop is the ability to help our spouses feel accepted when they share a feeling with us. Many of us are not aware of the dozens of ways we convey criticism or intolerance or insensitivity when our spouses express their feelings.

Whenever we respond negatively, our mates feel hurt and hide behind whatever mask protects them from further hurt. This exercise is designed to help you learn how to respond to your spouse's feelings in a way that will increase a sense of warmth, understanding, and closeness.

When your partner tells you how he or she feels, you must treat that feeling with care. Remember that when someone really accepts your feelings, you tend to feel understood and respected and you are inclined to share warmly more of your own feelings.

Couples should complete this exercise together. Read through the following interactions between a husband and wife in which one partner shares a feeling and the other responds. In each case decide whether the partner who responds (the second speaker) really communicates acceptance (+) or rejection (-) of the feeling.

Interaction 1

Wife: "I really felt hurt last night because it seemed to me that you were demanding sex from me whether I felt like it or not. I just didn't feel very important to you."

Husband: "Honey, I really didn't intend to force you into anything. I thought you wanted to make love."

Interaction 2

Husband: "At the Bible study last night, when I said what I thought that verse meant, you frowned and said, 'Oh, I don't think it means that.' I felt like walking out and never coming back. I'm still mad about it!"

Wife: "Oh honey, I'm so sorry, I really feel bad that I did that to you."

Interaction 3

Wife: "Every time you mention my weight, I just get so frustrated that I feel like eating more, especially when you say something in front of others. I feel absolutely crushed when you say anything about my weight. already feel bad enough about it."

Husband: "I think I sometimes say things like that just to get even for your remarks about our finances. When you tell people that we drive our old car because we can't afford a new one, I feel like it's a slam at me, and I get mad!"

Interaction 4

Husband: "Business pressures are really getting to me. I'm sick and tired of going to work. All I do is worry all day whether I'm going to make any sales. It's just too much pressure."

Wife: "Dear, maybe you should look for a job where there aren't so many pressures."

Interaction 5

Wife: "Tomorrow I have to get up and address our women's group to give a report on our project. I'm really a nervous wreck about it!"

Husband: "Honey, you'll do great! You always get nervous before something like this, but it always goes super. You don't need to be afraid."

Interaction 6

Husband: "I'm really feeling guilty about the amount of time I'm away from the family. I haven't sat down to play a game with you and the kids for months."

Wife: "I think the real problem is that you worry too much about our financial situation. That's what keeps you working so many hours. We'd all rather have less money and more of you."

Using the **How to Respond Chart**, evaluate the ways the above expressions of feelings were rejected in the responses. On a separate piece of paper, **Husbands**, read the feelings shared by the wife in Interactions 1, 3, and 5. Write out a response for each one that you think would convey acceptance of the feeling. **Wives** do the same for Interactions 2, 4 and 6. After you have completed your responses, give them to your spouses to respond as to whether the new response would have helped them feel accepted. Then using the same Interactions, write new responses that will *Reflect, Explore, Clarify* or *Extend* the feelings expressed. Use the **Guidelines** for help if necessary. (from The Marriage Builder, Larry Crabb)