

Ten Things You Should Know About Your Anger

1. The events of this world don't make you angry. Your "hot thoughts" create your anger. Even when a genuinely negative event occurs, it is the meaning you attach to it that determines your emotional response.

The idea that you are responsible for your anger is ultimately to your advantage because it gives you the opportunity to achieve control and make a free choice about how you want to feel. If it weren't for this, you would be helpless to control your emotions; they would be irreversibly bound up with every external event of this world, most of which are ultimately out of your control.

2. Most of the time your anger will not help you. It will immobilize you, and you will become frozen in your hostility to no productive purpose. You will feel better if you place your emphasis on the active search for creative solutions. What can you do to correct the difficulty or at least reduce the chance that you'll get burned in the same way in the future? This attitude will eliminate to a certain extent the helplessness and frustration that eat you up when you feel you can't deal with a situation effectively.

If no solution is possible because the provocation is totally beyond your control, you will only make yourself miserable with your resentment, so why not get rid of it? It's difficult if not impossible to feel anger and joy simultaneously. If you think your angry feelings are especially precious and important, then think about one of the happiest moments of your life. Now ask yourself, how many minutes of that period of peace or jubilation would I be willing to trade in for feeling frustration and irritation instead?

3. The thoughts that generate anger more often than not will contain distortions. Correcting these distortions will reduce your anger.

4. Ultimately your anger is caused by your belief that someone is acting unfairly or some event is unjust. The intensity of the anger will increase in proportion to the severity of the maliciousness perceived and if the act is seen as intentional.

5. If you learn to see the world through other people's eyes, you will often be surprised to realize their actions are not unfair from their point of view. The unfairness in these cases turns out to be an illusion that exists *only in your mind!* If you are willing to let go of the unrealistic notion that your concepts of truth, justice, and fairness are shared by everyone, much of your resentment and frustration will vanish.

6. Other people usually do not feel they deserve your punishment. Therefore, your retaliation is unlikely to help you achieve any positive goals in your interactions with them. Your rage will often just cause further deterioration and polarization, and will function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even if you temporarily get what you want, any short-term gains from such hostile manipulation will often be more than counterbalanced by a long-term resentment and retaliation from the people you are coercing. No one likes to be controlled or forced. This is why a positive reward system works better.

7. A great deal of your anger involves your defense against loss of self-esteem when people criticize you, disagree with you, or fail to behave as you want them to. Such anger is *always* inappropriate because only your own negative distorted thoughts can cause you to lose self-esteem. When you blame the other guy for your feelings of worthlessness, you are always fooling yourself.

8. Frustration results from unmet expectations. Since the event that disappointed you was a part of "reality," it was "realistic." Thus, your frustration always results from your *unrealistic* expectation. You have the right to try to influence reality to bring it more in line with your expectations, but this is not always practical, especially when these expectations represent ideals that don't correspond to everyone else's concept of human nature. The simplest solution would be to change your expectations. For example, some unrealistic expectations that lead to frustration include:

- a. If I want something (love, happiness, a promotion, etc.), I deserve it.
- b. If I work hard at something, I *should* be successful.
- c. Other people *should* try to measure up to my standards and believe in my concept of "fairness."
- d. I *should* be able to solve any problems quickly and easily.
- e. If I'm a good wife, my husband is *bound* to love me.
- f. People *should* think and act the way I do.
- g. If I'm nice to someone, they *should* reciprocate.

9. It is just childish pouting to insist you have the *right* to be angry. Of course you do! Anger is legally permitted in the United States. The crucial issue is--is it to your advantage to feel angry? Will you or the world really benefit from your rage?

10. You rarely need your anger in order to be human. It is not true that you will be an unfeeling robot without it. In fact, when you rid yourself of that sour irritability, you will feel greater zest, joy, peace, and productivity. You will experience liberation and enlightenment.

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