

## “Discover the Roots of your Anger and Make the Changes”

Mark D. Chapman

### *Anger*

Anger is one of the most dynamic and forceful emotions that can be felt by a human being. In fact, it can — and does — move a person’s very powerfully. Anger is an emotional response quite common among humans. It is a reaction to a perceived threat towards oneself. It can also be solicited from a perceived threat towards people important to oneself in the near future. This perceived threat may appear to be real or imagined. This emotional response can be taken from a perception (*A Bit of Buddhist Psychology*, 2003) due to a possible physical conflict, prejudice, carelessness, disgrace, or betrayal among other contentions. Emotions are not good or bad; they are simply part of life and it is what people choose to do with them that help decide whether they are labeled positive or negative. If angry feelings are suppressed, they may never become recognized or named, and this could lead to mental health problems (*Identifying Anger*, n.d.). Anger turned inwards can also be the cause of many relationship problems. Moreover, anger may trigger anxiety, which in turn may anger a person and cause varying complications (Cornelius, 1993, p. 128).

### *Impact*

Anger is a growing problem around the world. Anger is an emotion that most people feel frequently and strongly. Like all emotions, anger has several aspects. However, it is not just merely an emotion, but a segment in a bigger social picture that has a pivotal role in advancing or inhibiting actions that one may take. As long as feelings are concerned, communications and motivations are also part of the situation. Anger is not just a personal affair; on the other hand, it is an interpersonal issue that primarily focuses on relationships. It both communicates and motivates individualistic or group directional action. One instance is when people are in a state of fear. When people are anxious, this emotion is a sign that there is looming danger. Essentially, it communicates with them and provides indispensable information regarding the status of their surroundings. With this kind of function, it operates as a direct channel for evaluating their threat, one that bypasses slower acting cognitive channels (Zajonc, 1980). Concretely, anger and fear inform them that something is occurring that has the potential of damaging them (Fein, 1993, p. 24).

Anger in relationships is widespread and can interfere with one’s satisfaction and personal happiness. People’s ultimate success in life is closely associated with how well they manage difficult emotions such as anger. Despite this fact, most people receive little — if any — systematic training in anger management. In line with this, anger management skills are important in the process of building good social relationships.

In addition, anger can prove to be very destructive in relationships. In times when people are in close proximity with someone, inter-relational personalities, priorities, interests, and ways of doing things frequently and naturally are in conflict within groups. It is natural and has been a proven fact that conflict is inevitable. In view of the fact that people spend so much time together, and given that people are acquainted with others’ inadequacies, it is very easy to fall prey to growing to be decisive and short-tempered with one’s associates and to pointing fingers

for making situations, lives, and problems difficult and uncomfortable (*Anger & Relationships*, n.d.). Unless there is an initiative to make an incessant endeavor to deal with this anger every time it arises, a person's relationship within the community will eventually suffer. For instance, a pair may authentically love one another, but if they get irritated with each other more than being happy together, a greater division may develop between them. Ultimately, there will come a point when a new argument will be started before they have even recovered from a previous row. In this kind of situation, it is certain that love cannot survive in such situation.

#### *Anger and its Impact on your Physical Health*

Chronic anger not only affects people's relationships, but more importantly, it has physiological effects to the body that can lead to a variety of diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and other health problems that can be potentially life-threatening. Apart from its biological and physiological connections, anger is also related and believed to be involved in the development of negative health behaviors and practices such as smoking, alcohol intake, and lack of ample physical activities (Johnson, 1990, p. 35).

Anger's physical effects include adrenalin surges, high blood pressure, and increased heart rate. Anger can also use up energy and leave people with a feeling of fatigue and being drained with energy (Cornelius, 1993, p. 128). Emotional effects can lead to intense guilt, feelings of failure, depression, constant agitation, violent rage, and self harm. Moreover, medical research and psychological theory have long since recognized that chronic hostility and anger, whether suppressed or vented, can be causative factors in depression, headaches, heart problems, high blood pressure, insomnia, intestinal disorders, and ulcers (Tavris, 1984).

In addition, the continuous downpour of stress chemicals and linked metabolic changes that go together with repeated anger can cause damage to bodily systems in the end. Listed below are just a few of the short and long term health problems that have been linked to anger:

- Recurring headaches
- Indigestion and bodily problems such as abdominal pains
- Frequent insomnia
- A visible increase in anxiety
- Gloominess
- A relatively high blood pressure
- Skin problems such as eczema
- Heart attack
- Stroke (*Anger: How It Affects People*, n.d.).

Human beings are social in nature, and in order for them to interact in a positive way, some may need the skills of anger management from time to time to help cope with this emotion more effectively. The more skilled and competent one becomes in managing anger, the greater the likelihood that one will enhance their own well being. According to a body of well-researched evidence, relationship breakdown is on the increase. Divorce and interpersonal problems almost always involve children. Negative impacts on children can result in an increase in depression, anger, and self blame for the parental break up and anxiety over the future. (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2005). In many cases, these adults and children have not received any anger management training after the traumatic impact of a divorce, and consequently, they could carry

these angry feelings into all their future relationships (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2005).

#### *Assessment Process*

- Referrers to the anger management group would need to be present in the first assessment phase. This includes mental health professionals, direct line managers, and/or human resources departments.
- Referrers are also required to attend an individually assessed feedback session on the successful completion of the anger management course.
- On the successful completion of the course, individual group members and referrers receive feedback and suggestions for any further therapeutic work if required.

#### *Course Content*

The course is designed to help one identify the diverse roots of anger. It then offers practical strategies to manage anger. It is also poignant in pointing out how anger could ruin a person's life and those close to him/her. The manual begins with a description of anger and its various forms. Techniques and therapeutic applications are covered in detail to provide the reader with a reference guide. The course is particularly suitable for those wanting to improve their anger management skills and transfer these skills into practical use.

#### *Prerequisites for Course*

The most important part of this course is an honest and genuine "willingness" to admit that one's anger has become a problem to oneself and to others. One will need a strong motivation to change and replace existing behaviors with practical strategies. This course has the potential to teach a person to find new ways to relate and recognize patterns in one's own life that are in need of change.

- Coupled with the "willingness" to change, one will need to have a strong desire to address anger in practical ways. This course will provide one with an avenue of change citing and offering practical ways of overcoming this challenge.
- One will need a strong desire to improve one's reactions to anger and stressful situations.
- A person will need openness and willingness to at least give the strategies provided in this course an honest try.
- One would need to reach an agreement that anger and its effective management is not age related, and it does not matter how old or young a person is.
- Admitting to the fact that one's anger is out of control is essential in tackling the problem.

#### *Process of Anger Management*

*The course is designed to help a person change patterns of thinking and to:*

- Help one to recognize old patterns of thoughts and behaviors as cognitive distortions
- Help a person learn new ways to process his/her thoughts and respond in constructive way rather than a destructive way, which is called cognitive restructuring
- Demonstrate practical ways of change
- Teach an individual how to calm down in a structured way using live Spanish music

### *Course Objectives*

*This course is designed to help a person in the following areas:*

- A person will be encouraged to examine his/her own thinking, and own anger management skills so far in a safe structured environment.
- Negative methods of dealing with anger will be looked at and will hopefully be replaced with more effective ways.
- The course will help a person learn how to use an anger outburst as an opportunity to convert self contempt to self respect.
- The course will also teach an individual ways to respect his/her self and change perceptions that may not be working at this time.
- The course will help a person understand the negative attitudes in the rehabilitative and regenerative process.
- To help individuals to change using practical ways, well-researched and recognized techniques will be involved.

### *Group Work*

Many people perform tasks better when they are in the presence of others than when they are alone. This process is called social facilitation, which can occur on many tasks especially on anger management. By simply starting to read the anger management book is an indication that one's desire for change with others is strong, otherwise, a person would not have been interested in making the changes in the first place. The anger management course is presented in a group work format, which is a structured environment that is managed by a clinical psychologist.

People in groups tend to work harder and seem much more committed to change. This interesting phenomenon regarding performance in groups is not confined to people; this occurs in the ant population as well. Chen (1937) compared the amount of sand dug by ants when they were alone or in pairs or in a group of three. He found that groups of two and three ants did not differ appreciably, but in both conditions, the ants dug more than three times as much sand per ant as they did when they were alone.

### *Self Assessment Questions*

Do you find it increasingly difficult to trust others at college or in the workplace or even at home? Perhaps, the thought and fear of loneliness keep holding you back from getting on with your life. Have you caught yourself being overly concerned with what others think of you at college or work? When things do not work the way you want them to, do you tend to think, "What have I done this time?" Are there times when you feel that the world and the people around you are against you no matter what you do? Have you become sad and anxious for no reason then have an anger outburst all of a sudden, and end up feeling intensely guilty? Do you always want to keep the peace regardless, and then shy away from any hint of confrontations?

If you agree with these questions, there is a high probability that you have unresolved anger that may have kept you from reaching your potential in some way. Finding out the causes of your anger will help you reach a new level of personal freedom, and will provide a way of managing uncomfortable emotions.

### *Self realization*

The chances are high that if you do have a problem with anger, you already know it and are aware of some of its roots. If you find yourself acting in ways that seem out of control and frightening, this anger management course may be for you. In this course, you will be taught and helped to find better ways to deal with this powerful emotion.

### *Effects of Anger*

Mismanaged rage and anger is the major cause of conflicts in a person's personal and professional relationships. Interpersonal and communal animosities arise, build up, flare, and then dissipate all in the course of a day or a week. Some people are more susceptible to feeling distraught by these types of place of work measures for the reason of chronic feelings of low self-worth, insignificance, and defenselessness. When stress arises, one may grow to be dysfunctional, which can make others anxious (Allcorn, 1994, p. 94). They may respond by trying to make those around them into taking care of them. On the other hand, the response to apprehension may take account of overly animated responses or whole abandonment, which is just as dysfunctional however they have different effects. In line with this, if you like to refuse to be crippled by your own grudges, self punishment, self sabotage, and destructive thoughts caused by anger, please read on for this course may be for you.

If you are angry with someone else, you allow them to live rent-free in your mind. Are you having difficulty forgiving someone for something they did or did not do? Did someone make a mistake that you cannot let go of? If you are angry with another person for any reason, you allow them to control you. What events, people or relationships are you carrying that are making you unhappy?

### *Outcome of Anger*

Sometimes, people are all too aware of their anger, and by repetition, they keep leading themselves into trouble over and over again. Consequently, they become despondent and feel that they are in a trap, which results in becoming a "victim of their own anger." Sometimes, a person develops the need to show the world how wrong it has been towards him/her, as he/she manifests a form of victim anger. Victim anger strikes at a person's identity and usually results in an unhappy existence. When one becomes a victim of his/her own anger, that person becomes helpless and frustrated, and feel that perhaps there is no hope of any real changes.

### *Causes and Results*

Feelings of anger can also be caused by death, divorce, abuse, withholding affection, feuding families, a boss or a teacher who treats one poorly with disdain and rejection, or nations that are at constant war. All these feelings and situations can cause major problems for a person and those living near him/her. In addition, excessive anger can be caused by health problems, family issues, drug or alcohol abuse, financial problems, or extreme fear of stress and anxiety.