

Anger & Resentment

O God, I praise your word. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me? (Psalm 56)

Many of us have a hard time dealing with anger. Some of us have a history of rage, so we try to stifle our feelings. Others of us stuff down the feelings of anger; we pretend they don't exist because we were never allowed to express them in the past. If some of our problems stem from not knowing how to express anger properly, we may try to avoid dealing with it altogether. We may try to just "put it off" and hope it goes away. Evaluating how to deal with anger appropriately is an important part of our daily inventory.

The Bible says, **"If you are angry, don't sin by nursing your grudge. Don't let the sun go down with you still angry - get over it quickly; for when you are angry you give a mighty foothold to the devil.**" (Ephesians 4)

Dealing with anger promptly is important because when it is left to fester, it becomes resentment or bitterness. Bitterness is anger that has been buried and given time to grow. The Bible warns us, **"Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives.**" (Hebrews 12)

The Big Book of AA lists resentment as the number one factor that destroys people. It also teaches that we should never allow ourselves to become too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. Suggestions are given for doing an inventory around anger and resentment: In dealing with resentments we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions, or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were "burned up." ... On our grudge list we

set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal or sex relations which had been interfered with?

Dealing With Anger

1. Learn to recognize the many faces of anger
2. Admit that I am angry
3. Admit that my anger is the result of my choice
4. Set aside excuses for my anger, particularly blaming it on someone else's behaviour
5. Give up false understandings about how life works:
 - ✓ Letting go of anger means I am conceding defeat
 - ✓ No one understands my unique problem
 - ✓ There is nothing to look forward to anymore
 - ✓ Until the other person is fair and understanding (or at least agrees with me), I can't be happy
 - ✓ God should have stopped my problem.
 - ✓ I've always been misunderstood and treated unfairly so this is just more of the same
6. Give myself new information
 - ✓ I dislike what has happened but I choose to live in peace in spite of it
 - ✓ Others do not have to act correctly before I choose the proper direction for my anger
 - ✓ Choosing to drop my resentment is not the same as admitting I'm wrong
 - ✓ Forgiveness and letting go has nothing to do with winning or losing
 - ✓ It is not necessary for others to accept all my opinions. We can disagree.
 - ✓ I accept others' freedom to live in unhealthy ways
 - ✓ If I must confront someone, I can do it with respect
 - ✓ I can make and live good choices even if someone dislikes or disagrees with my choice
 - ✓ If someone chooses to judge me, I am under no obligation to receive their opinion as fact
 - ✓ My peace of mind is a gift from God not the result of someone liking or agreeing with my choices

Faces of Anger

- Impatience
- Critical thoughts
- Displeasure that leads to withdrawal
- Inwardly annoyed
- Inner tension
- Frustration
- Avoiding someone I do not like
- Lack of acceptance of someone who will not admit his/her weakness or mistake
- Talking about an irritation without wanting to hear another point of view
- Cannot forget when someone does me wrong
- Feeling discouraged enough to want to quit
- Overly aggressive in situations that don't require it
- Blaming others for my problems
- Struggling with moods of depression
- Maintaining an "I don't care" attitude towards the needs of others
- Speaking sternly or insensitively (sometimes covered up as a joke or sarcasm)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. Who or what makes me angry?
2. What is it that is hurt or threatened in me when I get angry?
3. Which "faces of anger" are the most common ones I experience?
4. How does God suggest that I deal with the pain and frustration I experience?
5. What are some anger management strategies I've heard, learned about, or tried? What's the result when I've put one or more of these into practice?
6. How does prayer make a difference when I find myself in frustrating circumstances?