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Active Mind & Body Newsletter - Issue No.8 November 2007
Feeling your way into Health and Happiness
Anger Friend or Foe

In my last newsletter we discussed Sadness and how it is a very natural and normal emotion that can be caused by many things, but most often comes up around experiences of loss.

In this edition I would like to focus on Anger.

- Have you ever felt ...
- Your jaw clenching without you consciously doing so?
- Your hands squeezing tightly into a fist
- Like you wanted to yell and scream
- Like you could hit something or someone
- Increased heart rate
- Red (emotionally or your skin actually changed to a red colour)
- Or that something was unfair, violating or unjust

These are all examples of how Anger can express itself in us.

Anger is one of those emotions that is seen as “bad” or “negative” and is often associated with violence and inappropriate behavior. However anger is a very useful emotion because it tells you when things are unjust or becoming violating!

Therefore, the emotional logic of anger is often about violation and equality.

Anger and the middle road

Anger is one emotion that is very hard to do well! In fact, people often suppress their anger, which leads to emotional, physical and social complications. Some individuals take out their anger on the wrong person or express it in an inappropriate context, which also causes problems.

Some of the things my clients say about anger include:

Anger is a sign of weakness
I am so spiritually developed I don't feel anger
Anger is not feminine
Anger is not safe
What if I get angry and it doesn't stop
I am scared of what would come out if I got angry; and
I don't want to be an angry person like my dad.

These beliefs about anger can lead to unhelpful ways of coping with anger.

A very useful tool when dealing with anger is to find what I refer to as “the middle road”. i.e. Rather than suppressing anger, sometimes it helps to hold it back a little or gauge the expression of anger so it is appropriate.

Another tool is to be mindful of where we are targeting our anger. This means being assertive and standing up for ourselves when things are violating or unjust, and ensuring we are not taking our anger out on other people in an inappropriate way.



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A few helpful steps...

When we feel anger, working through the following steps can help us experience and express anger in a more positive way:

- The process will start with you noticing the sensations of anger (see the list above)
- Label your experience accurately as anger
- Don't run from it, accept it
- Check if it is the primary emotion (if not look for what you are feeling deep down), if it is the primary emotion stay with it
- Put it into words: "I am feeling angry!" Or, if you know what it is about "I am feeling angry about"
- Ask yourself, "What can I do about the situation"? This will require you to confront who or what ever is causing the violation or inequality.

Anger as a Deflection

The other thing to be aware of with anger is that it is often a response to another emotion, deflecting away from the primary emotion or about the primary emotion. (Remember that a primary emotion is the first and deepest response we have to something and is therefore the emotion we need to focus on ... because secondary emotions are often responses to the primary emotion).

Sometimes when people have the primary emotion of vulnerability, fear or pain they can deflect these difficult emotions with anger. Or the anger could be a secondary emotional response aimed at the reason why they feel vulnerable, fear or pain.

So if you do feel anger ask yourself, "is this the primary emotion or not"? Staying with the primary emotion will be more useful, even though the anger can be quite seductive in these situations.

Enjoy

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone who may be interested, email or call me with any questions you may have or better yet send me stories about how you have used these ideas to make positive changes to your life.

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Coming Soon

This completes the series of 4 newsletters on dealing with difficult primary emotions. If you have a topic you would like me to focus on in coming editions, please email your request to me.

If you no longer want to receive this email newsletter contact me on the following email address activemindbody@optusnet.com.au