

Understanding anger by Lloyd Robertson

You probably know someone who is almost always angry. Have sympathy for that person. He or she has a greater chance of having a stroke, heart attack, serious accident or catching a contagious disease than do those with less anger. The chronically angry die younger than those who manage their anger well.

To your body, anger equals stress. It shuts down your immune system leaving us vulnerable to bacteria and viruses. It impairs our judgement so that we talk louder, drive faster and take more risks than normal. It puts extra stress on our hearts.

Anger is a secondary emotion. There is always some other emotion such as hurt, fear, embarrassment, confusion or disappointment that comes just before we feel the anger. When we feel anger, we lay blame for our first emotion.

The chronically angry are often afraid to feel that first emotion. Some may be under the mistaken idea that the first emotion shows weakness while anger shows strength. Anger management involves having the courage to recognize and feel whatever emotion that came before the anger.

The angry person may have the mistaken belief that things always happen for a reason. When disappointed that person "knows" that there must be some person or some thing to blame. Blaming then leads to a false sense of meaning. Anger management means recognizing that sometimes things happen and no one is to blame.

The angry individual believes that the world is unfair and that one must fight for what is needed. Often that individual was raised in an angry fight filled home. Anger then becomes a way of gaining extra energy to fight harder. Anger management means recognizing that often we can usually achieve more by cooperating and working together than by fighting.

Anger is often prompted by the mistaken belief that others should do what we want or live by the standards we have set for ourselves or else they deserve to be punished. Anger is then a way of gaining power and control over others. Anger management means recognizing that true control is self control and that we must have tolerance, even appreciation, for the differing views and lifestyles of others.

Other mistaken beliefs that often lead to anger and abuse include:

"If I want something then I deserve it"

"If I work hard I should be successful or someone is to blame"

"I am the head of the house and my wife and children must always do as I say"

Sometimes anger is like an addiction. The person, often a couple, may have a depressing lifestyle. They only feel "alive" when the adrenalin rush, that comes with anger, is surging thru

their bodies. The mistaken belief is that they need anger to feel alive. With counselling they can find alternatives.

Sometimes people are afraid of their anger. They may be afraid of offending people, of losing friends or of being a "bad" person. They hide their anger, collecting it. They may "explode" unpredictably. They may suffer chronic hypertension. They may become bitter with their anger coming out in drops, in "hit and run" shots at safe targets. Such people can be taught to deal their anger in healthy ways.

Anger management involves replacing mistaken beliefs with more realistic beliefs. We can control our emotions thru our thinking. The result is that we are always responsible for our behavior. Like all other emotions, anger does have a purpose providing it does not become a way of life and providing it is released in responsible ways. If you think that you may have an anger management problem talk to a mental health professional.