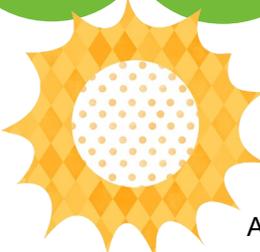


The Peacemaker Center Spring Newsletter 2015



The value of a relationship is always greater than the conflict of the moment.

Vicki Shay, M.A.

Anger never starts as anger. Anger is an emotional reaction to feelings of pain, hurt, shame, fear, frustration, guilt, threats to self-esteem... virtually any kind of emotional or physical distress. Basically, angry people have three things in common:

1. they are in a lot of pain,
2. they feel helpless to do anything about the cause of the pain, and
3. they get angry as a way to temporarily mask the pain.

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"You see, anger only works for a little while. The guilt, shame, or hurt will come back."

The operative word here is "temporarily," and here's where the trap forms. You see, anger only works for a little while. The guilt, shame, or hurt will come back. Something is said or done, triggering feelings of shame and unworthiness. You have to get angry again to stop it. Meanwhile, your loved one doesn't like being used as your emotional punching bag, and he or she is getting hurt - and then, *angry* - and reacts by withdrawing, withholding, blaming, or criticizing. This triggers more pain in YOU that you have to block with another angry outburst.

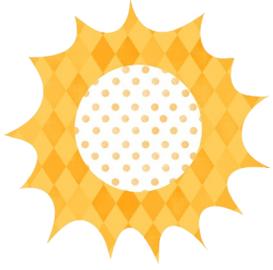
This is known as an anger cycle. Your relationship is stuck, and you're both trapped, because anger - no matter how right and legitimate it feels - is always a short-term solution. When one partner's words or actions cause feelings of frustration, shame, guilt, or blame, the typical reaction is to slap them with words to cut them down and make them feel just as small. The only real escape from the anger cycle is to stop using anger and punishment as a protective shield.

Chronic, destructive anger is not necessarily a sign that



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About the Author:

Vicki has a Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from Immaculata University, and joined The Peacemaker Center in August 2013. Vicki became a therapist because of her desire to help people navigate their complex worlds in order to live in a healthier and happier life. People come to therapy when what they have already tried isn't working and they know they need to try something different. Vicki's mission is to help them overcome their difficulties and provide the support and guidance they need to reach their fullest potential. She believes that the knowledge of God as the ultimate healer can give people the hope they need for change. Using a therapeutic approach that combines reality theory and person-centered techniques, Vicki works to facilitate an environment of hope and healing; to integrate faith, grace and proven psychological principles with individuals, couples and families as they work through their difficulties and goals towards greater personal growth and wellness. Vicki enjoys working with couples and families; her areas of interest include anger management, anxiety, and depression, women's emotional health, family therapy, adolescent behavior issues, and trauma treatment.



your relationship is doomed for failure. It is, however, a sign that changes need to be made. For most couples, how anger is dealt with can become a big part of the problem, and can make it nearly impossible to figure out what the problem is, or how to fix it. Punishing the one who hurts you is instinctive, and riding tandem with that impulse is often the belief that retaliation will make you feel better. This is the primary myth of anger, that turning your anger outward in the form of *vengeance* will help you heal. But the truth is that any relief you feel is temporary and will soon be replaced by another round of hurts. Unresolved and unaddressed anger can dissolve your relationship from being a positive, loving, and beneficial experience to an unhealthy or even dangerous one.

Most adult anger is about expectations and values not being met. We build up strong belief systems of how things *should* be or *should not* be and then expect others to behave in ways that we deem best. Expectations can be realistic (I expect you to be faithful to me in marriage) or unrealistic (I expect you to keep a perfect house all the time. Or, I expect you to let me indulge in my addiction to alcohol.) The 'shoulds' are the irrational ways we make our self and others crazy by insisting that

small, insubstantial things be our way.

In order to get control over anger, we encourage individuals to identify what their anger is and where it is coming from. Is it rooted in feelings of hurt, invalidation, frustration, fear, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, inadequacy, guilt, etc.? These are trigger points. And once a person knows their trigger points, instead of always reacting with anger they can step back, take a time-out and say, "This is how I responded to what you said. Is that what you meant?" When couples stop to discuss the little things, they are resolving conflict versus reacting.

When people begin to deal with the issues that lead to anger, they begin to grow and heal in these areas. This process takes time, but when couples make the commitment to do things differently, they soon see that their issues *are* fixable.

The Peacemaker Center's Anger Management program is designed to help people manage their anger more effectively and eliminate the negative consequences associated with anger. If you would like more information on how Anger Management Therapy can help your relationship, please visit our website at www.thepeacemakercenter.org

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