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**Making Friends With Anger**

For many of us, anger is a problematic emotion or feeling. It is our enemy. Here are some universal issues this emotion raises:

* Stuffing angry feelings for a time and then having an explosive outburst. (the last drop of water that overflows the glass)
* Frequent angry outbursts when confronted with frustration, disappointment, not getting ones’ way, etc. (think tantrums)
* Expressing anger toward a safe individual instead of at the person who you are *actually* angry with. (misplaced or displaced anger)
* Always bottling up anger causing medical problems (ulcers, headaches, muscle spasms, gastrointestinal distress to mention a few)
* Always bottling up anger causing psychological problems (anxiety, depression, substance use, addictions to mention a few)
* Out of control anger leading to violence (possible child abuse, domestic violence, arrests)
* Out of control anger leading to possible homicide or suicide

These examples are very serious and it might be a lot of information to absorb. Any of these examples would be considered inappropriate or ineffective expression of anger. Anger serves a purpose when expressed in a productive manner. Releasing anger prevents the building up of resentment and prevents the results mentioned in this article. Appropriate expression of anger can be a catharsis for many of us. We just need to be smart about how we let the anger out. (Think of *slowly* letting the air out of an inflated balloon).

Many of us have a complicated relationship with anger. In childhood, we learn how to react to different situations. Generally, our family of origin serves as the model for how we behave. If we witnessed anger as the solution in many cases, we will learn that anger works as a solution to solving problems. If in our family of origin, anger led to violence, one of two outcomes will occur. As adults, we will have the same negative relationship with anger or, witnessing the dangerous effects, it will turn us off to ever expressing anger. Either way, this all or nothing approach is not ideal. Arriving somewhere in between having violent outbursts and never expressing anger is a healthier outlook. It is healthy for our own mental and physical health and those around us.

Here is a limited list of anger management tools:

* Express angry feelings in real time using an “inside” voice and assertive communication (see my article)
* Take a time out. Never allow anger to lead to violent behavior
* Practice healthy self-soothing strategies such as relaxing breathing, meditation practice, grounding techniques, exercise and journaling
* Think before you speak and act

These skills require practice, patience and perseverance. Making friends with anger makes a lot of sense. Please understand that those of us who are unable to manage their anger effectively risk the loss of important relationships, employment and our health to mention a few. If you need help, get it so you can be your best self and live your best life.

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