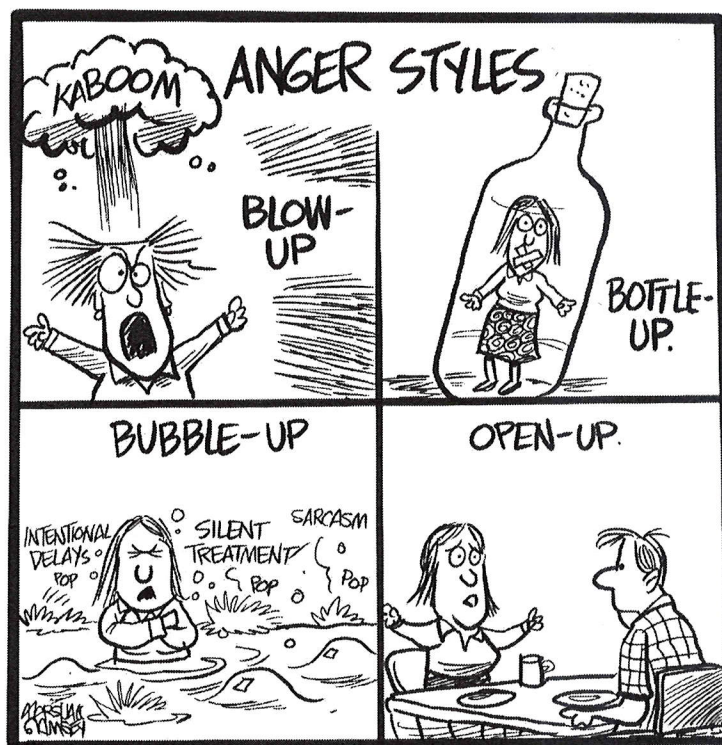




Chapter 3

Take the Quiz: “What’s My Anger Communication Style?”

“But wait! I just came here to learn about how to deal with somebody else’s anger! I’m a master at keeping the peace. Why do I need to take the test?”

Well, hang on a sec. I’d be willing to bet that you become frustrated when someone is acting out or some life event derails you; am I right? So, what do you do with that frustration, and how do you express it (or not)?

Truth is, everybody experiences anger, and that’s not bad. However, as we’ve seen, the way you convey it is a different story. Ask yourself three questions.

1. How do you deal with anger when you feel it coming on or settling within you?
2. How do you express your frustrations to others?
3. How do you internally manage your unsettling or tumultuous emotions?

By taking this quiz, you're going to discover a little more about you. You'll be able to use that information to become a more effective communicator when conflicts and frustrations nibble or bite at your heels.

How Did You Get This Way?

With repetition over time, we've all developed habits of thinking and communicating behaviors when we're angry and upset. We were born with certain personality tendencies, and we've molded those traits through accidental and intentional learning. For better or worse, much of what we've learned has been seared into our minds through interactions with others. We've watched and copied. Sometimes we swore we'd never do what others did, but we did, or we went to the dysfunctional opposite extreme. Some have experienced emotion-fueled, unplanned episodes of anger and either liked the dopamine rush or hated the outcome – or both.

Some have developed constructive conflict management skills by intentional study or coaching because we sincerely wanted to approach it the right way. I hope all are ultimately in the latter category after reading and applying what you learn in this book.

Some anger communication strategies work better than others, yielding actionable improvement plans. Others...not. The good news is, you can make changes that will help you and those around you.

The Anger Communication Inventory (ACI)

I developed the Anger Communication Inventory to help you become more aware of the habits you've formed around anger – yours or someone else's. This isn't a formal test that's been validated in controlled studies. However, it's based on my decades of clinical experience helping

people with various styles of anger, and the concepts in the items are supported by the available literature.

So, your responses to the ACI will provide clues about how you express anger. In Chapters 4–7, you’ll learn a lot more about each style and how your thoughts and actions may be helping or hurting you and those around you. By the time you’ve completed the chapters, you’ll know what your anger habits are and how to change the harmful ones. You’ll also experience some “aha’s” about the angry people in your life. The reward for your efforts will be peace of mind and greater peace in your relationships. Let’s get started!

Here Are Your Instructions

Rate each of the items below, using a scale of 1–10, with 1 meaning, “not true of me at all,” and 10 meaning, “definitely true of me.” It’s important to be honest when rating each statement, recording what is rather than what you wish it were.

(not true of me at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (definitely true of me)

- _____ 1. I may not speak up directly, but I toss hints, become sarcastic, or “kid” about things that bother me.
- _____ 2. I really don’t like conflict, and I do my best to avoid it.
- _____ 3. When something goes wrong between someone else and me, I try to initiate a constructive discussion about it.
- _____ 4. I sometimes explode and say mean things. Too often I’ve hurt people I care about at home or work with my words.
- _____ 5. I’ve found it’s better to just do what it takes to keep the peace.

_____ 6. In a conflicted discussion, I actively look for ways that all parties (not just me) can “win.”

_____ 7. My hot buttons are easily pushed. It doesn’t take much to set me off.

_____ 8. I’ve secretly tried to make people look bad or to make them uncomfortable.

_____ 9. I feel resentments inside, but I try not to show it. My face and words are different from the angst I really feel.

_____ 10. At times, I take my anger out on inanimate things, punching, throwing, or damaging them.

_____ 11. Sometimes on purpose I procrastinate to show someone they cannot control me.

_____ 12. When discussing issues with a person with whom I disagree, I am an open and attentive listener.

_____ 13. I do more than talk about a problem. I help to make an action plan and then follow through.

_____ 14. I have hit or assaulted a person with whom I was angry, or I have come close to doing it.

_____ 15. If someone calls me out on a secretly hostile communication or gesture, I deny that I was hostile and act innocent.

_____ 16. I don’t like to upset people, so I try to stay supportive and keep them happy.

_____ 17. I use the silent treatment to communicate my displeasure.

_____ 18. People would describe me as “nice,” but sometimes I don’t feel so nice on the inside.

_____ 19. When in a disagreement, I intentionally work on seeing and understanding the other person's point of view.

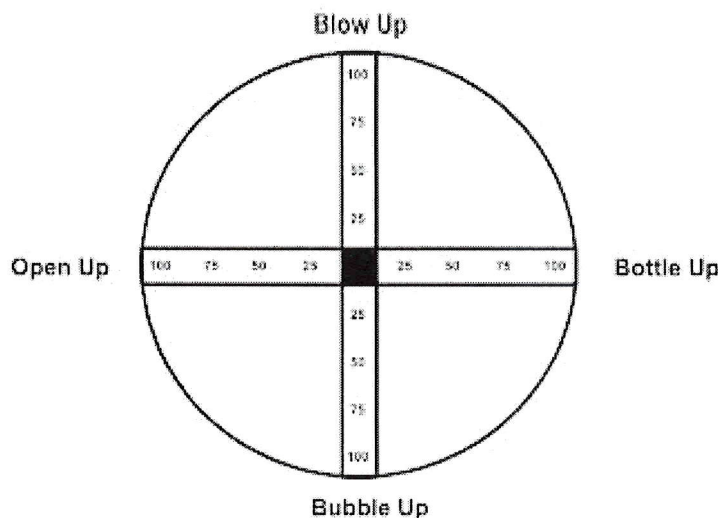
_____ 20. I will strongly stand up for my rights, no matter how it affects someone else.

Scoring

Now copy the rating you assigned to each item into the appropriate blank provided below. Enter the subtotals in the blank marked "Sub." Multiply each "Sub" by 2, and enter your total (TOT) score on the bottom line. You will have four scores, one for each style.

Blow Up	Bottle Up	Bubble Up	Open Up
4. _____	2. _____	1. _____	3. _____
7. _____	5. _____	8. _____	6. _____
10. _____	9. _____	11. _____	12. _____
14. _____	16. _____	15. _____	13. _____
20. _____	18. _____	17. _____	19. _____
Sub _____	Sub _____	Sub _____	Sub _____
$\times 2 =$	$\times 2 =$	$\times 2 =$	$\times 2 =$
TOT _____	TOT _____	TOT _____	TOT _____

Now, transfer each of your final scores onto this Anger Communication Wheel, using a bold dot. Connect the dots.



In preparation for our upcoming exploratory journey, go to work on raising your self-awareness. Answer these questions after you've plotted your results.

- What communication style do you tend to lead with? (Which score is highest?)
- What's your second most frequently-used style?
- Which are you least likely to use, based on what you see here? (Lowest score?)
- Can you think of any situations in which you're more likely to use certain styles?

Anger Styles: Quick Definitions

We're going to take a deeper dive into each of these in the coming chapters. You need to know more about how each one works and how to relate with someone who exhibits each pattern. Here's a brief preview of what's to come.

Blow-Up Anger. The Blow-up style is often openly aggressive and hostile in words and actions. Blow-Up words put the other person down, dominate the interaction, and attempt to

“win” the argument. Think yelling, name-calling, accusations and blame, cursing, and even threats.

Bottle-Up Anger. The Bottle-up style happens when someone suppresses resentments and turns anger inward. These folks struggle with boundaries, avoid conflict, and worry about others’ reactions. Their focus? “Keeping the peace” at any cost.

Bubble-Up Anger. The Bubble-up style (often called passive-aggressive) communicates resentment indirectly. Think sarcasm, intentional delays, silent treatment, withholding, and contemptuous body language. This is what happens when anger “leaks” out sideways.

Open-Up Anger. Unlike the previous three regressive styles, Open-Up enables progress. You express your opinions and feelings while hearing and respecting others’. You take responsibility, balance both sides’ needs, and aim for solutions that work for everyone. This is where relationships actually become stronger.

Awareness – Now What?

Once you’ve completed the Anger Communication Inventory, you’ll have some initial insights about your habits and how you express frustrations differently depending on the time, situation, and person. Just as importantly, I hope it’s gotten you thinking about the styles of people in your world.

In the next four chapters, we’ll explore each style. You’ll discover why you default to certain patterns, what triggers your worst communication moments, and how to shift toward more effective strategies. You’ll also learn how to recognize these styles in others — and what to do about it.

We’ll start with the one most people associate with “an anger problem.” Ready?