

ALL THE RAGE

How to Deal with Angry People without Becoming One Yourself

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

One Evening · Thirteen Questions · Notes for the Host

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For the Host

You do not need to be a therapist to lead this evening, and you should not try to be one. Your job is to ask the question, then get out of the way. The book has already done the teaching; the group only needs someone to keep the conversation moving, keep it kind, and keep it honest.

Before the meeting

- Send the pre-meeting note on the next page with your usual reminder. The evening is built around two self-assessments in the book, and it works far better when people arrive with their results.
- Take both assessments yourself. You will be more relaxed about the personal questions if you have already answered them privately.
- Read through Questions 11 and 12 in advance. Those two go deepest — forgiveness and grief — and you will want to know they are coming.
- Plan on ninety minutes. If you have sixty, use only the seven starred questions.

Ground rules — read these aloud before you begin

Two ground rules tonight. First, no fixing. We are not here to solve anyone's situation, and advice is the fastest way to shut a person down. Second, what is said here stays here. And you can pass on any question without explaining why — some of this book gets close to the bone.

Four disciplines that make or break the evening

Never ask for numbers — only for shape. Highest, lowest, surprised or not surprised. The moment someone says “I scored a fourteen on Blow-Up,” the room starts ranking itself and the quieter members stop being honest.

Do not correct anyone's self-assessment. Self-report runs low on exactly the styles that cost the most. Blow-Up people under-score because they think of themselves as direct rather than aggressive, and Bubble-Up is nearly invisible from the inside. Question 4 is built so people can find this themselves. Let them.

Count to ten before you rescue a silence. When a question lands, the room goes quiet because people are recognizing themselves, not because the question failed. Hosts almost always fill that gap too early. Sit in it.

Redirect advice back to experience. When someone starts telling another member what to do, a simple “Has anything like that happened to you?” turns counsel back into story, which is what the group is actually there for.

If something opens up

Somebody at your table is living with the person this book describes. Expect that, and expect a question to land harder on one member than on the rest.

If that happens, stay with them for a moment — acknowledge it, thank them, and let the group be quiet with them. Then move on. Do not try to work it through in front of nine people, and do not let the group turn it into a case to be solved. Follow up privately afterward instead. If what someone describes sounds frightening or unsafe, that is a conversation for after the meeting, and the most useful thing you can offer is encouragement to talk with a counselor, a physician, or their pastor. A book club is a good place to be understood. It is not a place to be treated, and saying so plainly protects everyone in the room.

Send This With Your Reminder

Copy the paragraph below into your invitation or reminder message a few days ahead.

Before we meet, take both quizzes in the book — the Anger Communication Inventory in Chapter 3 and the Emotional Immunity Inventory in Chapter 8 — and bring your results. You will not be asked to read your numbers out loud. Score them honestly rather than the way you would like them to come out; the whole thing only works if you do.

The Evening at a Glance

- **Opening round.** Welcome, ground rules, and the opening question — 15 minutes
- **Part One.** What's my pattern? Questions 2 through 6 — 30 minutes
- **Part Two.** What protects me? Questions 7 through 12 — 35 minutes
- **Closing round.** One sentence each, around the circle — 10 minutes

★ marks the seven questions to keep if you are running short: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 10.

Opening Round

One answer each, around the circle, no cross-talk. The point is to get every voice into the room in the first ten minutes.

1. Chapter 1 punctures five myths: that angry people are easy to spot, that venting helps, that men are angrier than women, that time heals wounds, and that keeping the peace works. Which one had you believed — and what had convinced you? ★

Host note. *A content question, so nobody has to disclose anything in order to participate. That is exactly what an opener is for. Go around the circle in order rather than taking volunteers.*

Part One — What's My Pattern?

2. Before you scored the quiz, what did you think your dominant style was? Did the result confirm it or surprise you? ★

Host note. *Predict-then-check is the most reliable engagement device there is. The gap between the guess and the result is the discussion — and it lets someone who scored high on Blow-Up talk about being surprised rather than announcing a number.*

3. Which style did you grow up around, and how does that compare with your own result? ★

Host note. *Plenty of people default to the opposite of what they were raised with. Noticing that out loud is usually the first real moment of the evening.*

4. Bubble-Up is called “nasty-nice” — the sigh, the eye roll, the “forgotten” deadline, the compliment with a sting. Which of the three channels — what you say, how you say it, or what you do — is your own sideways outlet when you do not want to have the conversation?

Host note. *Ask this even of the people who scored low on Bubble-Up. Almost everyone has one channel, and the inventory does not reliably catch it. This is the style people are least able to see in themselves, which is why the question asks about behavior instead of about the score.*

5. Shelley breaks down when she is asked what she really sees when Paul walks into the room. She sees her father. Whose face are you sometimes reacting to that is not actually in front of you?

Host note. *Expect a long pause. Let it run. If nobody speaks after a while, offer your own answer first and then re-ask — that is usually all it takes.*

6. David describes his transformation as emotions moving from a motorcycle ramp to a wheelchair ramp. Looking at the Six A's — Antecedent, Adversity, Appraisal, Arousal, Affect, Action — where do you actually have the most room to intervene? ★

Host note. *Most people say Action. The book argues that the real leverage is upstream, at Antecedent and Appraisal. Let the group arrive there rather than telling them; if they stall, ask what would have had to happen an hour earlier.*

Part Two — What Protects Me?

7. Look at your Emotional Immunity profile. Which booster is your strongest — and can you point to where you built it? ★

Host note. *Start with strengths, not deficits. It makes the next question survivable.*

8. Now your lowest one. Without going into any detail you would rather keep private: does that low score match a place where anger tends to get you? ★

Host note. *This is the hinge of the evening — it connects the pattern from Part One to the vulnerability in Part Two, which is the book's central argument. The phrase "without going into any detail you would rather keep private" is doing real work. Read it out loud; do not paraphrase it away.*

9. Take the chapter that matches your lowest booster — Practical Optimism, Self-Worth, Post-Traumatic Growth, Forgiveness, or Purpose. What did that chapter name that you had not put words to before?

Host note. *This lets five people discuss five different chapters at once, each becoming the room's expert on their own. Much livelier than marching through the second half of the book in order.*

10. Patti, after the layoffs: "I never tell myself something bad happened to me. I remind myself this happened for me." Is that wisdom or is it denial? Where is the line between practical optimism and telling yourself a comfortable story? ★

Host note. *The best argument of the night, and the one question where you want disagreement. The Stockdale material gives the group a way to hold both — but only after they have felt the tension, so do not resolve it early.*

11. G-Daddy crosses the length of the chapel to shake the hand of the drunk driver who killed his wife. The claim is that forgiveness releases you, not the offender. Do you buy it? Is there a case where the framework would not hold?

Host note. *People will raise hypothetical hard cases; some of them will be thinking of real ones. Do not press anyone to name theirs. If the group starts insisting that a particular person ought to*

forgive, slow it down — forgiveness offered as an obligation is a different thing from forgiveness chosen as a release.

12. Amy's moving sidewalk. The book insists that you grow while grieving, not instead of it, and that growth never means the loss was worth it. Did that distinction land, or does growth after tragedy still feel like a stretch?

Host note. *The tenderest chapter in the book. Volunteers only — do not call on anyone by name here. Someone in your group has very likely lost someone. If this opens something up, stay with them briefly, then move the evening along and follow up afterward.*

Closing Round

One sentence each. No commentary, no follow-up questions — just around the circle and done.

13. “You did not choose what happened to you, but you can choose what happens next.” Name one thing you will do differently before we meet again.

Optional Questions

Use these only if they fit your particular group. Neither is required, and each carries a caution.

The sharp one

If your group is small and the members are close friends rather than acquaintances:

“What would the person who lives with you say your score was?”

Host note. *This is the single most revealing question available on the anger inventory, and in a group of three or four old friends it is terrific. In a club of nine acquaintances it can put someone on the spot about their marriage in front of the whole room. Judge your table honestly, and if you are unsure, leave it out.*

If your group shares a faith background

These are written so that a member of any tradition — or none — can still answer, but they will land hardest in a group with a common faith.

- a.** Most traditions teach that forgiveness is required of us. The research says forgiveness is mainly good for the forgiver. Does being told you must forgive make it easier to do, or harder?
- b.** The book treats purpose as something discovered rather than manufactured — that your hardest seasons are part of what prepared you for the work in front of you. Do you experience your own history that way? When your sense of purpose is clearest, what happens to the small fights you might otherwise have picked?

Host note. *Both questions have an honest secular answer, so a member who does not share the group’s faith is not cornered. Watch for the group answering the way it believes it is supposed to answer; the phrase “or harder” in the first question is your permission slip — name it if nobody takes it.*

A Note on the Book You Just Read

Half of this book is written for people who are managing somebody else's anger, and the other half is written for the person managing their own. Most readers arrive believing they are in the first group. By the end of an evening like this one, a good many of them have quietly revised that.

If your group would like the author to join you for part of a meeting by video, get in touch. [Add your preferred contact line here.]

Keep going, keep growing, and you'll come out stronger on the other side.