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The High Cost of Anger – Part 1

By Dr. Tony Fiore

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Learn to manage your feelings for better health. Suppose you are standing in the 'express' lane of a supermarket checkout. You see that the third person ahead of you has about 25 items and is paying by check when the signage clearly restricts this aisle to 10 items and cash-paying customers.

You, on the other hand, are standing there with a dollar in your hand to purchase a package of chewing gum.

The cashier is doing nothing to manage the situation and, in fact, is having a friendly chat with him about his life while she is ringing up his items.

If you are like most people, you will probably experience angry feelings. Then what should you do? How should you respond?

There are three ways to deal with angry feelings:

1. View the situation differently. While angry feelings frequently surprise us and come upon us automatically, it is our 'self-talk' that makes us angrier. Change what you tell yourself about what is going on, and you can drastically change your feelings about it. In our example, try telling yourself things like "Maybe he or she isn't aware this is an express lane," or "Actually, a few minutes more won't matter," or "I'll speak to the manager about the issue when I have more time."

2. Relax and cool down. Once captured by intense angry feelings, we may become incapacitated and unable to problem-solve or to obtain the information we need to deal with the issue. The solution is to cool down before doing anything.

For example, while standing in line, take in several deep breaths. Count to 10. Tell yourself things like "Calm down," "This won't be important tomorrow," and "I can control my emotions."

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3. Look for alternatives. Look for different ways to respond to the situation, before angry feelings overtake you. Maybe you can still get what you want without displaying angry behavior. For instance, try simple information giving ("Are you aware that this is an express lane?"), or assertive communication ("May I get ahead of you since this is an express lane and I only have one item?")

It is almost always better to try alternatives before expressing anger or aggression!

Why keep yourself calm? Because doing so may help you live healthier and longer. Anger is like obesity. It is everywhere but not good for anybody. In fact, according to a recent issue of The Harvard Mental Health Newsletter, "optimistic hearts do better than angry ones."

In one study, people with normal blood pressure who scored high on a rating scale for anger were nearly three times more likely to have a heart attack or require bypass surgery within five years.

The anatomy of anger

Most of the time we do not choose to be angry, but somehow we are suddenly in the feelings. Often, we don't know we are angry until we feel it.

Anger, which comes from a part of our brain that is very old, can be very brief, lasting only a second or two. You can be happy one moment and angry the next. Angry feelings may also continue over a long period of time. If you are angry a lot, but your feelings are not connected to life circumstances, we call it a 'mood.' Angry moods lead to angry feelings coming on stronger and faster.

Once anger begins, it generates changes in our expression, our face, our voice and changes in the way we think. It also creates impulses to action. Sometimes we have thoughts that generate anger. Other times we have thoughts that occur at the same time as the anger. It is also possible for your anger to generate thoughts about what you are angry toward.

The different faces of anger

You may have noticed that what 'triggers' your anger one time may not do so at another time. Different people may also react very differently to the same event. Some people recover much more quickly than others when provoked by any negative emotion, including anger.

If you are a quick-recovering person, you probably are also better able to control your emotions. However, if you are challenged in this regard, you will need to work harder to develop anger management skills to deal with your feelings.

Angry feelings are a natural reaction to frustration or interference with our goals. Yet, we all are different in terms of what events trigger anger in us, how strongly we respond and how long it takes us to get back to normal. Learning to see a situation differently, cooling off and looking for alternative responses are all effective ways to better cope with angry feelings.

Dr. Tony Fiore is a So. California licensed psychologist, and anger management trainer. His company,

The Anger Coach, provides anger and stress management programs, training and products to individuals, couples, and the workplace. Sign up for his free monthly newsletter "Taming The Anger Bee" at

and receive two bonus reports.

Anger and Scarcity

By Janet Ilacqua

As a small business owner or freelancer, you will experience periods of abundance and scarcity, many times for reasons beyond your control. Therefore, it is important for you to learn how to deal with your feelings about scarcity in order to put the most into your business

An emotion that is always present when there is a sense of scarcity in life is anger. Big surprise, you may think. The surprise actually is that very often, it is the anger, which is holding success at bay. Frequently, the individual is angry at success, about success, about money in general or about who gets to have it. This anger may be suppressed, only coming out in bitterness at the "privileges of the wealthy," or some similar trigger. Envy or jealousy may be other ways of expressing the anger.

Anger can halt success. The purpose of anger as an emotional energy is to push something away. We cannot be receptive and angry at the same time, anymore than a hose can flow water in two directions at once. Money itself cannot harm us. However, it is often the target of our anger when we feel that it has been used against us. If we feel that we have been betrayed, cheated or hurt in some way financially and are unable to release or forgive the experience, we will hold it away from ourselves. Since money or success is part of the experience, it will be held away as well.

No one has to stay angry. It may take some work, but if we are sincere, forgiveness, release or both can occur. Generally, the test is whether it is more important to remain angry or to have the benefits of peace. When we are sincerely attached to our anger, this can seem like a trick question. It really is not. Anger can and should be released if one wants to reap the benefits of peace. Let it move into the past where it belongs. Now and the future are about peace and success.

Janet K. Ilacqua is a freelance writer based in Tracy, California. She specializes in academic writing and ghostwriting of books and manuals for individuals and small businesses. For more information about her services, check her website at

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