

The Heavy Costs of Anger

The Anderson model presents some of the prices or costs people pay for expressing anger.

At one time or another, *everyone* experiences needless anger. Here are five specific signals that will tell you when anger is creating problems for you.

1. *When it is too frequent.* There are many situations for which becoming angry is justified and natural. However, we often get angry when it is not necessary or useful. It is important to distinguish between the times when it is all right to be angry and when getting angry isn't a wise idea.
2. *When it is too intense.* Anger is something that occurs at different levels of intensity. A small or moderate amount of anger can often work to your advantage. However, high degrees of anger rarely produce positive results.
3. *When it lasts too long.* When anger continues over time, you maintain a level of arousal or stress that goes beyond normal limits. When anger does not go away, your body's systems are prevented from returning to normal levels, which makes it easier to get angry the next time something goes wrong. Sometimes, it becomes impossible to resolve.
4. *When it leads to aggression.* Aggressive acts are likely to result in trouble for you. When you feel you have been abused or treated unfairly, you may want to hurt the person who has offended you. Verbal aggression, like calling someone a name, is not helpful and often leads to aggressive behavior.
5. *When it destroys work or personal relationships.* When your anger interferes with doing a good job or makes it hard for people to relate to you, then it becomes a problem.

Why should you and those you care about work to control your outbursts of anger or rage? Clearly, there are some important reasons why you may determine that it is in your best interest and those around you.

Anger Destroys Personal Relationships

Damage to personal relationships is one of the most common costs of anger, and probably the worst. The relationships that are damaged are often the ones you least want to lose. The most frequent targets of anger include spouses, children, co-workers, and friends. Often, actions taken under intense anger are regretted after the damage is done.

Think about your life. Has your anger undermined any important relationships? Do you tend to blame people for how you are feeling? If you continue this pattern, where will you be a few years from now? Letting go of your anger and being more accepting and flexible in close relationships will probably serve you better both long-term and short-term.

Anger Destroys School and Work Relationships

School and work can be very frustrating. Demanding teachers, parents, supervisors, jealous co-workers, irate customers, deadlines, and unfairness of all sorts; these can test your patience. Your anger about frustrations, however, can frustrate you even more. Anger can ruin school and work relationships and limit your success. It can also block your ability to focus on important issues, perform quality work, and earn good grades.

Anger Makes Bad Situations Worse

In spite of all the negatives, doesn't anger have some positives? Doesn't feeling angry sometimes help you face difficult situations? Won't it help you to feel empowered and in control when confronted with adversity? Isn't expressing your anger necessary for asserting yourself and getting your point across? These are all good questions. Psychological research has not yet shown whether anger increases or decreases your effectiveness in handling difficulties. In fact, it appears that few researchers are interested in pursuing this issue. However, many people have jumped to the conclusion that you must feel angry when facing unfair situations. The Anderson model teaches that anger has the capacity to cloud people's ability to reason and behave effectively. You are not likely to think clearly when you are angry.

While anger may help in some situations, it is rarely helpful in making positive change or solving conflicts. Although anger is a normal

human emotion, it is hardly the most useful for solving problems. Think about it and decide for yourself whether rage is helpful or harmful for you.

Anger Often Leads To Aggression

Another reason to control anger is that it can easily lead to aggression. Have you witnessed violence in your own life? Have you seen violence in the local news? Do you believe that our society is one of the most violent in the world? Do you know anyone who has been the victim of a 'drive-by shooting'?

According to recent statistics of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, one violent crime occurs in the United States every seventeen seconds. Acts of violence are particularly prevalent among teenagers. Murder or homicide is currently the second leading cause of death among ages **15-24**, making interpersonal violence one of the most important public health problems.

All forms of violence, including *road rage, desk rage, spousal abuse, child abuse, animal abuse, elder abuse and violence between children*, have reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Approximately 40% of women who are murdered in this country every year die at the hands of their boyfriends or husbands.

Violence in families also takes a grim toll on young children. A government report concluded that, in the United States, approximately 140,000 children a year suffer serious injury from child abuse.

While anger does not automatically lead to aggression, it often does.

It is often a blueprint for violence. For many of you, who may not have considered addressing this issue on your own, our program, using the Anderson model, may well be an opportunity to improve your ability to manage intense emotions