

STAGE RE-BUILDING FIVE

ANGER How Could You Do This To ME! ?

You will feel powerful rage when your relationship ends. Feeling anger is a natural, healthy part of being human. However, anger is different from aggression which is a destructive form of expressing anger.

It is not healthy to keep your anger locked up inside and nor is it to express aggressively. You can learn to express both your anger over the ending of your relationship along with everyday anger constructively.

I don't know what came over me. I saw his car in the parking bay and I knew he had met this girlfriend and left in her car. I went over and let the air out of all four tyres. Then I went behind a building and waited until they returned so I could watch them find his car with the tyres flat.

I watched them trying to solve their problem and I felt so, so good. I've never done anything like that before in my life. Guess I didn't know how angry I could get. Jean.

We are approaching a point where we can become consumed with anger and if we don't deal with it adequately, it can stop us in our tracks instead of us progressing through the rebuilding process.

Relationship anger is extreme rage, vindictiveness, and bitterness which at time seems overpowering. It is a special kind of anger that we usually have not experienced before and many of our friends who are still in relationships do not understand it either unless they have gone through the breakdown and end of a relationship.

You may try to keep this anger inside and not express it and this can result in reactive depression because one cause of such intense sadness is anger not being expressed. The dumper does not express it because he/she feels guilty and the dumpee fears the other person will not come back so both are 'nice' for a while, except that they feel a lot of intensely sad thoughts and feelings.

Anger is expressed in violent ways many times.. Many people, given the opportunity while they are angriest, will commit an act of violence. It is crucial at such times to be able to restrain ourselves and find more suitable methods of expressing these feelings of rage and vindictiveness. We can find more constructive uses of anger than destroying ourselves with depression and psychosomatic problems (headaches, body tension, ulcers, and the like.) Also, since the fires of anger can spread to other rebuilding stages, if we can work our way through this block, we will have much less trouble handling the other all important parts on our rebuilding journey.

This rebuilding block has three phases:

One - learning to accept that it is okay and part of being human to feel angry. There are many myths in our society that say that to be angry is to be weak, childish or destructive. In essence we are told that it is not permissible to be angry. Now we have to relearn that it is natural and whilst this might be easy to

do intellectually it is much more difficult to embrace emotionally. Remember there is a difference between that feeling of anger and the way we act to express it.

Two - after we embrace that we are human and naturally feel anger we now need to see positive ways of expression which are not destructive to ourselves or those around us. We can do it with humour and physical exercise.

One of the most destructive ways is where people use children as a vehicle for expressing anger at their former partner. Some make children into spies when they return from visits. Some people restrict their former partner access.

Three - is the stage of forgiveness and this is not just about forgiving the other person but also learning to forgive yourself for we are also angry with ourselves. You are responsible for this anger because it is your feeling not someone else's and whilst projecting blame for anger on to someone else may be a part of the process - the part that allows us to get out the anger that has been causing our depression - when you get further along the journey you must learn to take responsibility for that anger yourself.

Essentially it is so much easier to blame someone else but this stage of forgiveness is actually learning to forgive ourselves for the choices we have made or the actions we have taken and letting go of our anger.

At this point I would like to discuss positive ways to express anger; ways that will not be harmful to you or to others.

Let me emphasize that important difference between the special relationship ending anger you may feel and your anger in

connection to other life situations. First I will present some ways to express your anger whenever it occurs in your relationships. Relationship ending anger needs to be vented and released in a non-destructive way. Anger in future relationships - friends, family, partners, and children - needs to be expressed directly, firmly, honestly but in a constructive way to encourage communication and a deeper relationship.

Let's us focus for a short while on our temptation and desire to take our anger out on the former spouses directly. We want to call them up and hurt them, get back at them, be vindictive, and express our anger directly to them. I do not believe that this is helpful in most cases. When you throw a few logs on the relationship ending - anger fire, your ex may throw a few logs back in retaliation. Pretty soon the fire is consuming both of you. I suggest that you express your anger in other ways, such as those suggested here, rather than taking it out on your former partner.

Humour is a very effective way of getting rid of anger. Harriet was the comedian of one seminar group. She would come to the group and say, 'I don't know what to tell people when they ask me where my former partner is. I don't want to tell them that he's off with another woman. So I finally decided that next time a person asks me, I'll tell them that he croaked!' she laughs and the whole class laughs and everyone has vented angry feelings through laughter.

One of the most effective ways of expressing anger is to call a friend and say, 'I need to talk about this anger that I am feeling. I know I may not make sense sometimes, I know that I may become very emotional. and I know that some of the things that I say may not be what I'm really feeling all of the time. But right now I'm feeling really angry, and I need you to listen to me talk about my anger.'

Many people are able to use fantasies to help get rid of it.

Sandy was an expert on this. She would fantasize the following incident: 'I would go to the garden store and buy a sack of hot lawn fertilizer. Then in the middle of the night I would go over to my ex's house and write obscene four letter words with the fertilizer in front of his house. Then he would read them every time he had to mow his front lawn all summer long!' We have to remember that these are fantasies and that we should not act them out.

Physical exercise of any sort is usually helpful. Physical games, jogging, house cleaning, beating a rug, or anything like that is especially useful. Anger is a source of energy and the energy has to be used up. Physical activity is a good way of using up that energy.

Tears are another good way for some people to express anger as crying is a positive, honest expression of feelings. Another effective way of getting rid of anger is to write a letter saying all of the things that you would like to say to that former partner. Write it in really big letters; maybe use a piece of crayon and write it with lots of anger. But after you have written the letter, do not post it. Instead, take the letter to the fireplace and burn it up. You have both expressed and symbolically burned up your anger.

You can use the 'empty chair', an effective gestalt therapy technique, which I use often with people I work with as well as with myself. Imagine the person sitting in an 'empty' chair is your former partner, and say everything that you would like to say to that person. If you are good enough at imaging, you can even switch chairs and say the things that person would say back to

you. Then go back to your chair and say the things that you would like to say again.

Another simple and effective way of getting anger out is to take an old garden hose and cut to a three foot length. Simply use it to beat on something that will not be damaged.

Incidentally, some people will not will not be able to express their anger because of a need to keep such anger close to them like a companion. If they let go of that anger, they will not have it as a toll for punishing the other person. So they have some sort of payoff or reward for keeping the anger.

Anger is one of the most important rebuilding blocks for if the fires are burning out of control in you then you will have trouble working up along the process of recovery. A great sense of relief will result from working through your anger until there is nothing but ashes left. It will free you to have energy for other areas in your life. You can forgive yourself and the other person. You have stopped blaming yourself, you have stopped feeling like a failure; you have found the internal peace that comes from letting go of everything that was painful. You find that you can talk to the former partner in a calm and rational manner without becoming emotionally upset. Now you can deal with friends- either your partner's or yours - without becoming irritated.

TIME TO TAKE A BREAK

Have you thought about how appropriate it is to feel very angry when a relationship ends? "What" you may ask "is appropriate anger?" Anger that is related to the present situation.

So the healthy approach to such anger and dealing with it is:

1. Recognise and allow yourself to believe that anger is a natural, normal, healthy, non-evil human feeling. Everyone feels it; we just don't all express it. So basically you needn't fear your anger.
2. Remember you are responsible for your own feelings. You got angry at what happened; the other person didn't 'make' you angry.
3. Remember that anger and aggression are not the same thing. Anger can be expressed assertively.
4. Get to know yourself, so that you recognise those events and behaviours which trigger your anger. As some say 'find your buttons, so you'll know when they are pushed.'
5. Learn to relax. If you have developed the skill of relaxing yourself, learn to apply this response when your anger is triggered.
6. Develop assertive methods for expressing your anger, following principles such as being spontaneous and not waiting to let anger build into resentment; stating it directly; avoiding sarcasm and innuendo; using honest and expressive language; avoiding name calling, put downs and physical attacks.
7. Keep your life clear. Deal with issues when they arise, when you feel the feelings - not after hours/days or weeks of stewing about it.

Go ahead and start to get angry but develop positive, assertive styles for expression. You and those around you WILL appreciate it.

CHECKLIST Now before our session check these statements and remember to be honest with yourself.

1. I can communicate with my former partner in a calm and rational manner
2. I am comfortable seeing and talking to my former partner.
3. I no longer feel like unloading my feelings of anger and hurt on my former partner
4. I have stopped hoping that my former partner is feeling as much emotional pain as I am or as much emotional pain as I WAS
5. I no longer feel angry at my former partner
6. It is not important any more that my family, friends, and associates be on my side rather than my former partner's side.
7. I have outgrown the need to get even with my former partner for hurting me.
8. I no longer blame my former partner for the failure of our relationship
9. I have stopped trying to hurt my former partner by letting him/her know how much I hurt emotionally.

10. I have overcome my anger and I have begun to accept the things my former partner has been doing.
11. I am expressing my anger in a positive manner that is not destructive to me or to those around me.
12. I am able to admit it when I feel angry rather than denying my angry feelings.
13. I understand the emotional blocks that have kept me from expressing anger in a positive manner.
14. I am able to express my anger constructively rather than venting it inappropriately.
15. I am reaching a stage of forgiveness rather than remaining angry.