

# Anger

Don't lose your cool!

*By Monica Fernandes*

The words “Anger Management” have become very fashionable today. Some mint money with anger management classes and there is even a movie on the subject. The truth is that anger is as old as the hills. It is an intuitive reaction to a stimulus and an inherited response from our prehistoric ancestors who had to fight for their survival. Anger releases adrenaline into the system and this helped our forefathers from the Old Stone Age to fight creatures much bigger than them. It is pertinent to mention that appropriately expressed anger is not a harmful emotion. Repressed or suppressed and unbridled anger, however, creates havoc with our relationships and health. Psychologists opine that some people are born angry. There is the occasional cranky baby who grows up to be an adult with a low tolerance level. But these kids are the exception rather than the rule.

Modern day society views anger as a negative emotion. We are taught from an early age to store our anger. The relationship between father and son is often that of between a superior and an inferior individual. The son thinks “Might is right. How could I possibly argue my case with someone so much bigger than me on whom I am dependent?” Instead, the father should teach his son to express his views in a polite manner. They could have a dialogue on a one to one basis. Parents at times vent their ire on their kids. When they cool down, parents should apologise to their children for over reacting and could say, “I am sorry for flying off the handle but I still feel unhappy about your action.” Anger appropriately expressed is necessary if children are to be disciplined.

When we cannot express our views rationally, we withdraw socially, sulk or become sick. Psychologists have observed that people who are often angry come from families lacking in communication. There are situations in life where anger cannot be expressed. Imagine that you have a boss who is a Hitler, who is pushing you to the limits and pulling you up for some petty reason. Perhaps he is venting his frustrations out on you. There is no way you could give your tormentor a piece of your mind and still hold your job. So what's the way out of your trap? Naren was caught in this predicament. He would let off steam by confiding in his buddies. He began practicing yoga and meditation. His positive attitude helped him to cope.

If you lose your cool, you are like a paper kite spinning out of control and dashing to the ground to destruction. You could get into a situation called the Anger Cycle. Your anger consumes you and, in such a situation, you could harm yourself or others. It is indeed unfortunate that some TV programmes and movies glorify violence and the Anger Cycle.

Anger often spirals out of control in a situation of tit for tat. Both parties trade insults and get progressively aggressive. Hence it is advisable for one person to maintain his/her cool and air his/her grievances later. Airlines and hotel employees are taught to keep cool under provocation.

The word 'psychosomatic' originates from 'psyche' which signifies the mind or soul and the Greek word 'soma' which means body. It refers to sicknesses caused by our subconscious. Smoldering resentment generates powerful negative forces within our body which surface in the form of stomach problems, inexplicable rashes, asthma and other illnesses. It would seem as if we are allergic to anger. Our efficiency is affected. Timmy complained of splitting headaches after his parents divorced. His headaches disappeared only after he and his parents went for counseling. Professional help facilitates the healing process. It unearths deep seated anger and helps the concerned parties to behave in a manner that solves or reduces such problems. The violence of some serial killers can be traced to repressed anger. Unpleasant incidents experienced in childhood are buried deep down in a person's subconscious and surface in violence. These are extreme cases. But, we too, sometimes bury our resentment as though it is a great treasure. A teacher's harsh words could result in a short temper in later years.

Parents are, after all, human beings with feet of clay. They are not infallible. Namita's parents would treat her like a second class citizen as compared to her brother, who was treated like a demi-God. Namita became a short tempered, unpopular person. She did not realize that her reaction was self-destructive. We also fly off the handle at situations we cannot or find difficult to change. One such situation is a traffic jam. This is a common occurrence on our streets due to religious processions, heavy rains or visiting VVIPs. What is the use of letting road rage get the better of us? It's not making the traffic jam disappear. A better alternative would be to distract our minds by listening to music and humming along. Or we could imagine ourselves to be in a picturesque place far from the madding crowd.

We must express ourselves when someone upsets us but in an appropriate way. Jaya is miffed because her best friend, Charmaine, has not visited her on Diwali. She wisely slept over her reaction so that she could cool down. She phoned her pal a couple of days later and expressed her feelings calmly. Charmaine apologized and explained that her mother had been suddenly hospitalized.

### **Experts suggest various ways of controlling anger.**

- 1 Breathe deeply while repeating a calming phrase such as "I am cool and calm"
- 2 Work on your anger management regularly.
- 3 Change your self-talk. Angry folks exaggerate their problems. If the electricity goes off for an hour, they fume and fret. They make absurd statements such as, "I am simply dying from the heat."

- 4 If you are at the receiving end of an unfair action, say to yourself, “This is a frustrating but it’s not the end of the world.”
- 5 Temper tantrums will not get your work done. Instead handle other in a firm and assertive manner.
- 6 Don’t work yourself into a frenzy trying to do everything yourself. Delegate.
- 7 Choose the right time. Don’t badger someone about a perceived slight when they are tired.

**Remember that angry words once spoken cannot be retrieved.**