



PENNY HOLBURN COACHING

It's about You and Results

Anger #*%\$ Management

1 September 2016

Although anger has got a bad wrap, anger itself, as a feeling, is a perfectly normal and healthy emotion. It is the inappropriate acting out of anger that is the problem. Like all feelings, anger is sending us a message. We need to listen to the message and understand why we are feeling angry. We typically feel angry when we perceive our rights have been trampled on, when someone has done us wrong, when we are under threat and when our very survival is at stake. These are situations we need to pay attention to. Our angry feelings are telling us to inquire about what is causing us to feel this way.

What you do not want to do is act out your anger without thinking about what you are doing. You can damage property and people in this way. You can do damage that cannot be undone. You can get a criminal record. I had a client sent to me by his organization for anger management. Later on when he was up for promotion they acknowledged his progress and personal growth in managing his anger. But they never quite forgot his previous angry outbursts, even years later, and so he never got his promotions. If you have an anger problem then deal with it. The sooner the better. People have long memories and like to play things safe.

Often three main ways of dealing with angry feelings are outlined. These are 1) Expressing Anger, 2) Suppressing Anger, 3) Calming. There are in fact variations of managing anger which involve more than one. One of the best ways is to calm yourself, and then verbally express your anger assertively (not aggressively).

Expressing Anger: *Anger can be expressed aggressively (not a good idea) or assertively (a very good idea). Assertively dealing with anger means you 1) check that your perceptions are accurate and fair; 2) understand why you are angry and what you need; 3) express what you need demonstrating self-respect and respect for the other party.*

Suppressing Anger *means you don't express your anger. Suppressing anger in the long term is not healthy. If you suppress it for a short time in order to decide how you want to deal with it, that is okay. If in the long term you never express your feelings, you get problems. Suppressed anger often finds a way out – such as through passive-aggressive behavior (you indirectly express your anger and others know something is wrong but not what it is). Suppressed anger often manifests as cynicism,*

hostility and criticism. Completely suppressed anger can lead to high blood pressure or depression or other health issues.

Calming

If you are inexperienced in managing anger then the best approach is to calm yourself first using the techniques listed below, and then express your feelings in an assertive manner.

Calming Methods:

1. When you start getting really angry and have the urge to lash out, **relax**. Breathe deeply. Slowly repeat a word like "relax" over and over again. Then use imagery. Imagine a relaxing, calming scene in your mind. You can also take a short walk, do some stretching or yoga poses. Remind yourself that acting out your anger will make things worse for you.
2. Cognitive reframing –which in essence mean **change the way you think**. You feel angry because of what you perceive happened. If something bad happened don't say things like, "things always go wrong for me," because they don't. If you are angry with what someone did, then consider that you might have misunderstood their intention. They may not have meant any harm.
3. Get busy **problem solving**. Stop thinking of this as a disaster and start thinking of the situation as a problem to be solved. Don't react. Think about how you want to act.
4. You may benefit from improving your **communication and assertiveness skills**.
5. The underlying meaning for angry people is – **everything must go my way**. One therapist recommends clients picture themselves as a god or goddess walking down the street and playing the role. It doesn't take too long to see that you are being unreasonable.
6. **Humour** can work – but NOT sarcastic humour. And the timing is important because humour can either work very well for you, or backfire badly.
7. **Manage your stress**. If you are highly stressed you are more likely to act inappropriately. Make sure you have some stress management actions in your weekly schedule. Part of managing stress is making sure you have boundaries in place to preserve your space, time and energy.
8. If nothing you have tried works then get **professional help**.

If you or someone you know has an anger problem, don't just throw your hands up in the air and say, "Well that is just the way I am." You can do something about it. And the sooner the better.