

## ANGER: THE "A" WORD

By Brenda Spina, M.S., LMFT, LPC

The emotion of "anger" is a response that, I believe, has been misunderstood. The Lord was one who not only felt but also expressed anger. It is a power filled emotion in need of an ongoing awareness of self and motive. God will not participate in man's anger. However, I believe the Lord is very much interested in walking with us through the process of identifying and learning appropriate avenues of expressing anger. Ephesians 4:26 states, "Be angry but sin not...". This tells me angry feelings are normal. Our first step is allowing the Holy Spirit to alter our beliefs about such an intense emotional response. Let's begin with identifying some aspects of anger not usually thought of. The following are adapted from "Anger, Alcohol, and Addiction" by Ron and Pat Potter-Effron.

The capacity to feel anger is natural. God has created us with the ability to feel anger. It includes a biological change in our bodies and it is normal. It serves to aid us in identifying and responding to our survival needs.

Anger is a signal to others and ourselves that something is wrong, to be careful, or may be needed to survive some dangerous situation. God has created us with the instincts and emotional responses that let us know when things are not right or safe. As a relationship cue it indicates the presence of tension or even danger.

A "fight" response can mobilize us in a moments notice helping us battle social injustices, a debilitating illness, or threats to one's safety. It is crucial that we learn to attend to this signal rather than trying to ignore it.

Awareness of anger increases our awareness of others and ourselves. Anger creates as well as signal when there is too much distance/closeness between people. Identifying themselves, God or others. It is the bridge between the shock and numbness to acceptance of change the loss brings.

Anger may be the last emotion to resist numbness and despair. Individuals who have experienced abuse or families that have been deeply distressed often exhibit anger in this manner. This God-given response helps us prevent physical and emotional collapse. It is one's fight to live with the hope of returning to a place in which other responses may be experienced safely.

The expression of anger can occasionally help a person to feel good, strong, or whole. These times are when one takes a stand in the face of behaviors that exhibit contempt or shame. This does not advocate the same shaming or contempt response.

The expression of anger can be a gift of caring, involvement, and vulnerability leading to a greater intimacy in relationships. Individual who are willing to risk experiencing short-term conflict are those who are willing to pursue building deeper, more intimate relationships. One cannot have intimacy without the conflict just as one cannot have

mountains without valleys.

Dealing with one's anger can lead toward reconciliation. A willingness to pay attention to our own responses increases awareness to when our relationships become unbalanced. Owning responsibility for the impact of one's angry responses paves the way for the restoration of mutual harmony and comfort for all involved.

Our limits along with our needs in relationships can result from the emotion of anger. It lets us know our limits as to how much distance or closeness we can handle or when our/others needs have gone to long without care.

Anger may be a part of the normal grieving process. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) has long noted that normal grief often involves a period of anger, sometimes intense, in which the griever may be furious with the person who has dies.

Anger can lead to and stimulate creative activity. Remember the times when you are so angry you move immediately to action? This can result in new professions, cleaner homes, as well as setting new limits around behaviors in relationships that are un-Christ-like.

*Compliments of Practical Family Living, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920*

*You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute our articles in any format provided that you credit the author, no modifications are made, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you include Practical Family Living's web-site address (<http://www.pfl.org>) on the copied resource. Quotations from any article are also permitted with credit to the author and citing the web-site. Any use of other materials on this web-site, including reproduction, modification, distribution or republication, without the prior written consent of Practical Family Living, Inc., is strictly prohibited.*