

The MIND Reader

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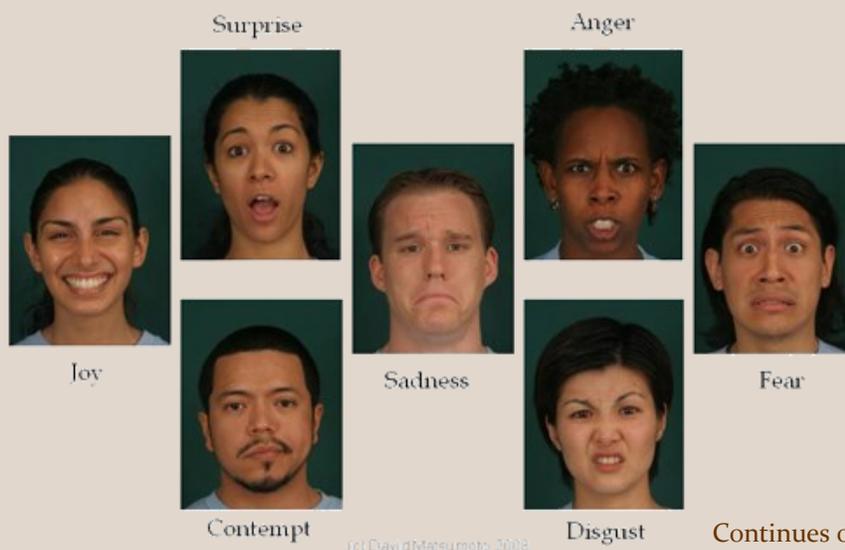
Anger Management is Wrong... Kind Of

By: Dr. Sheri Fluellen

Anger management ranks among the top 5 of the most sought after types of treatments in our agency. You can usually find classes or groups on anger management, judges often court-order people into anger management, and movies are made from the idea (see *Anger Management* starring Adam Sandler and Jack Nicholson). Clearly, anger is seen as an issue that needs addressing in our society today.

While I don't disagree that anger may need addressing, I want to strongly caution you from assuming that anger = bad. Our emotions exist for a reason, and they are "good". They are not just annoyances that should be ignored, discounted, or beat out of us. Emotions exist as a warning system. They alert us that something important is going on. That is their most basic function. Pick any emotion, and I can give you the functional reason that it likely exists.

*On an aside and interesting to note- researchers largely agree that there are only 7 universal human emotions: anger, contempt, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, and surprise. Universal emotions mean that all cultures in the world display them and that even cross-culturally, people are able to recognize these emotions on peoples' faces. This is fascinating stuff!! See <http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2011/05/facial-expressions.aspx> for more information. (1)



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THIS ISSUE

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- ◆ Anger in Adolescents—Excerpt from *Psychology Today*
- ◆ Anger as Direction

Mind Spa embraces a holistic approach to wellness as we recognize our body, mind and spirit are interconnected. Ensuring your body is healthy, your relationships are strong, your emotions are balanced, and your spirit is fed are great places to start. In support of this, Mind Spa has an exciting new addition we will be announcing soon. Stay tuned!

Anger Management is Wrong... Kind Of (continued)

I propose that anger fundamentally exists when something happens that violates our personal code of ethics. The more deeply we hold a value, the more angry we get. We find ourselves using “should” statements because what we think is the “right” way of being was not followed by someone else. “He should never have done that to me!!” or “She should have known better!”

While anger is a universal emotion, sometimes it can be used to mask other more difficult emotions. For example, if you grew up in a family that didn't recognize sadness and depression as legitimate feelings, you may find yourself covering up those feelings with anger instead. Anger is (unfortunately) viewed by our culture as much more acceptable than depression.

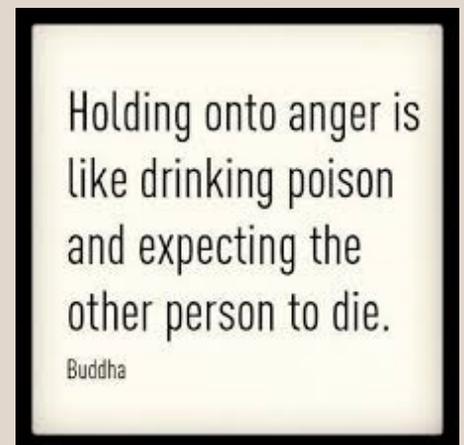
How should you effectively deal with your anger? 1) Let your anger educate you on what you really value, and then 2) take action.

Sometimes this analysis will just restate the obvious. For example: you hear about a child abuse situation in your town. You are angry at the abusive parent. If you follow your emotions (which may not be too difficult), you may discover your personal value that children are innocent, precious, and to be protected.

Sometimes this analysis can help you discover more hidden reasons why you are getting so dang mad at something that just seems trivial. For example: blowing up at your spouse because they left a mess in the kitchen, again. If you follow your emotions and your values to their most basic and fundamental level, you might discover that you don't care so much about the mess but that it is a signal to you (in a pattern of signals) that you are not being respected as a spouse and that you are being taken for granted. That is your value, your personal ethic.

The second step is to take action. Taking action might be specific to a situation or might be in efforts to change the bigger picture. In the first scenario, you might be able to make an impact on this specific situation by donating money, time, services, or just showing support to the abused child. You might also be compelled to the larger issue and become more active in the public education of abuse and impact on children. In the second scenario, taking action might be to share your feelings of disrespect to your spouse, request marital counseling, or work with a trusted individual on how to cope with the situation.

Getting back to the idea of anger management, I often hear people say they want to be less angry. If that is you, don't just assume you need to numb your emotions to be less angry. I would challenge you to assess why it is you are angry and determine how to act based on what values are being violated.



Anger in Adolescent—Excerpt From Psychology Today

The process of adolescence itself can be an angering one because it is filled with frustrations. For example, you're supposed to act as directed when increasingly you don't like being told what to do. You want more freedom for independence, but you must still live on parental terms. You're asked to act more grown up, but are frequently reminded that you are still only a child. Parents hold you back when you want to grow full speed ahead. They make demands when you have better things to do. They want to talk when you have nothing you want to say. Come adolescence, a major source of frustration and target of anger in the lives of many teenagers are their parents: "They're always in my business, against what's fun, demanding work, on my case, or acting unfair! Parents can be a pain!" So: accept that adolescence is a more angry age and that most of that anger will be directed at parents as the primary ruling powers that be. (3)

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Resources: (1) <http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2011/05/facial-expressions.aspx> (2) <https://robbsdramaticlanguages.wordpress.com/2014/07/31/> (3) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/surviving-your-childs-adolescence/201302/teaching-your-adolescent-about-anger>