

How do we let go of anger?

Unexpressed rage can be toxic. We must learn to express our needs and fears, says Mike Fisher.

Interview

Who is most likely to repress anger?

A child growing up in a family where there is lots of aggression and hostility will learn there's danger in anger. That child grows up thinking: 'My anger is dangerous. It's safer to hold it in.' It may be that a child grows up in a household where there's no outward expression of anger. They live in a house of atmospheres, and the child's imagination starts to run wild, as they have nothing to pin their anxiety on. They feel anxious about everything and believe it's all their fault. These are 'imploders', who tend to turn the anger on themselves. They store resentment and irritation over many incidents until they are sitting on a volcano of anger.

When a person fears rejection, they are afraid to express anger. They become empty, and their message is: 'I need you to love me, I'll be whatever you want me to be.' This, too, grows out of childhood if the child receives the message that expressing anger is bad.

What are the consequences of repressing our anger?

There are the physical aspects – skin ailments, heart problems, migraines and headaches. Psychologically, we may see obsessive compulsive disorders or other compulsions that are transferred to the realm of addictions.

If a person represses anger, they tend to develop passive aggression. This typically consists of sarcasm, criticism, blaming others, withholding and controlling. This person, while radiating rage, will not accept they get angry. Their task is to stay empty – never to challenge or confront. Passive aggression often leads to low-level depression. This person's repressed anger is dangerous because when they do blow, there is meltdown.

How do we let go of passive aggression?

A person who is afraid of being angry is also afraid of expressing needs. The passive aggressive person has to work out how to get their needs met. They should learn how to be assertive.

Losing your temper can feel like a relief but the fall-out is damaging, and can often lead to feelings of guilt.

If you communicate your feelings of frustration, anger is channelled outwards and can be dealt with. If you feel angry or upset, you should be able to say so without exploding.

The goal is to become assertive without being aggressive, so it's important to be able to say:

- This is what I feel
- This is what I want
- This is what I think

For example: 'I don't feel you listen to me, I don't feel valued. I'm aware there are times I don't listen to you.'

They also need to deal with the underlying problem: their fear of being rejected and abandoned. This underlying fear is what prevents them from expressing anger and keeps them in a pattern of repression. The goal is to express your needs.

For more details visit [Anger Manage](#) or read 'Beating Anger' by Mike Fisher (£7.99, Rider Books)