

What's Making You Angry?



Introduction

When we are angry, three things are happening: 1) We are upset because we are not getting our needs met; 2) We are blaming someone or something else for not getting what we want; 3) We are about to speak or act in such a way that will almost guarantee we will not get what we need, or that we will later regret.

When we are angry, we focus almost completely on what we *don't* want, and our thinking is caught up in images of the wrongness of others that are involved. We have lost sight of what we really *do* want and need.

Using the steps below you will learn how to change this pattern and connect with the life-serving purpose of anger. You will discover where anger comes from and learn how to express it in ways that meet both your needs and the needs of others. Use these steps to re-focus your attention during an angry conflict and learn to create outcomes that are satisfying for everyone involved.

STEP 1

Think of Anger as a Red Light on Your Dashboard

Anger is like a warning light on your car's dashboard—if you attend to it promptly you're more likely to get where you want to go. Remember, when dealing with anger the goal is not just to “turn off the red light.” Anger can be a wonderful wake-up call to help you understand what you need and what you value. Like warning lights and gauges, your emotions and the physical sensations in your body are there to help you understand which of *your needs* are being met or are not being met.

So, when tempers flare or violence looms, it helps to remember that you can make life enjoyable for yourself and others if you focus your attention on what you need, and put aside any ideas of the other as “wrong” or images of them as the “enemy.” Make it your goal to attend to your underlying needs and to aim for a resolution so satisfying that everyone involved has their needs met also.